

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO



3 1822 00144 1260

TALES FROM



BLACKWOOD



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO



3 1822 00144 1260

70

Blackwood Magazine

T A L E S

FROM

“ B L A C K W O O D ”

New Series

VOL. V.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS

EDINBURGH AND LONDON

PA
1309
153
452
v. 5

CONTENTS OF THE FIFTH VOLUME.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A JOINT-STOCK COMPANY
(LIMITED).

BEE OR BEATRIX.

THE NIGHT-WANDERER OF AN AFGHAUN FORT.

AYRSHIRE CURLING SONG.

THE LIGHT ON THE HEARTH.

HOW TO BOIL PEAS.

CLIVE'S DREAM BEFORE THE BATTLE OF PLASSEY.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD."

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A JOINT-STOCK COMPANY (LIMITED).

[MAGA. JULY 1876.]

IN a few days my brief and stormy career will finally close. I can calmly, and even thankfully, contemplate this premature extinction of an existence which has ruined reputations, shattered fortunes, and carried want and misery into hundreds of humble homes; for I am wearied and worn out with the effort it has caused me to achieve these deplorable results, and utterly disgusted with the advanced state of civilisation which has made me the victim of its immoral tendencies. As far as my exhausted and feeble condition will allow me to feel anything, I think I can honestly say I am conscious of being in a repentant frame of mind.

What philosopher can explain to me the nature

of the causes of which I am the vile effect? It was not my own fault that, like those who first hatched me, I was conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity, and became almost immediately the means of demoralising every one who came into contact with me, of deceiving those who trusted in me, and of crushing those who opposed me, until my own turn came, and I fizzed out in a gutter of fraud like a bad squib. Depraved though I am, I regret to say, that, knowing as much as I do of the merits of the other members of my fraternity who still exist and flourish, I may yet hope that a process of natural selection is in progress, and that joint-stock companies, like the human race, are to rise into new and better conditions through the "survival of the fittest." At the same time, I know that I am not altogether bad; for I always found myself in sympathy with the few honest men upon my board. Now and then I experienced the novel and delightful sensation of awakening conscience, forming good resolutions—which at one time I intended to keep; and I looked forward to a calm and serene old age, soothed by the reflection that thousands would be rendered happier by my existence, and that my own health and wellbeing would be a source of amiable anxiety to numbers of respectable shareholders.

How the moral element thus temporarily infused into my system was afterwards expelled, and my

whole nature became even worse at the end than it was at the beginning, is part of the thrilling story of my life to which I invite the attention of the reader; and I address myself to all without distinction, for all will be the wiser by the perusal of this most timely and instructive warning. I address myself to you, my innocent clerical friends, in remote country parishes—for I know of no more ignorant and confiding class of investors—and though you may not think that the life and fortunes of a joint-stock company (limited) can interest you whose vocation lies in such a very different direction, as long as you have little earnings which you blindly invest on the faith of neatly-addressed circulars and prospectuses, you are interested, deeply interested, in the story I have to tell. I address myself to you, fair readers, especially widows and spinsters; for however capable you may think yourselves of enjoying the franchise, I am able from my own knowledge to declare that you are utterly unfit to manage your own money-matters, and I should never have been able to enter upon my fraudulent career had it not been for the powerful support I derived from the trusting contributions of confiding or speculative female investors; and now, in such solemn tones as I find it possible to command, reclining as I am at this moment in the arms of my official liquidator, with but a feeble spark of vitality still left, I warn you

to read carefully this melancholy history. Believe me, it concerns you deeply. Such of you as have invested in me, I shall endeavour to remind of my gay and misspent youth, by providing you, by means of the officer legally appointed for that purpose, with infinitesimal dividends, extracted at long intervals from my miserable and shrunken remains—Bless you!

I address myself to you, rich landed proprietors, who never meddle with City matters, or investments, or "that sort of thing," but leave it all to your men of business, and I ask you whether you have had reason to be satisfied with the results of their advice this year? Don't you think you had better try and understand a little where your money is, and where it is not? And you men of business, who advise your clients, no doubt with the best intentions, have you had reason always to be satisfied with the advice you have given them? Clever though you are, and honest though you may be, it will do you no harm to read my narrative. And you, impecunious connections of the aristocracy, who have neither brains nor experience, but think you know enough to combine West-end fashion with East-end financing, if you ever read anything, read me, that you may avoid having your purses,—which, indeed, at best are trash—stolen, and your good names filched. Alas! I fear that those I seek to reach are just those who will think I don't concern them.

The parsons, the widows, the orphans, the officers on half pay, the rich squires, the titled dupes—the sponges, in fact, whom I want to warn against the squeezers, will pass me by, while the squeezers themselves will chuckle over my adventurous career, as thieves read the police reports, partly on account of the affectionate interest they take in the profession, and partly in the hope of picking up a wrinkle or two for future use and guidance.

Having taken the liberty, with a frankness which I regret formed no part of my original character, but which my approaching dissolution has suggested to me as expedient, to address these and all other classes of my readers, I will now endeavour to convey to them some idea of the process of my inception. I wish it, however, to be distinctly understood, that while I carefully veil the mystery of my identity, I am not altogether a mythical character; that the facts of my existence are real, and not imaginary; and that there is nothing I am about to relate which has not actually occurred: at the same time, any attempt of the most experienced promoter or knowing broker to discover exactly who I am, or rather was, will be utterly futile, so artful is the disguise behind which this record of my varied fortunes has been concealed.

Disdaining to take refuge in a fictitious name, and scorning the subterfuge of a sham prospectus,

I will merely say that I first received the rude outlines of my subsequent shape in the ingenious brain of a needy and adventurous speculator. This gentleman, who had passed through the various phases of an officer in the army, a member of the House of Commons, and a broker on the Stock Exchange, from all of which he had, in one form or other, been practically, if not by any formal process, expelled, had been driven to earning a precarious livelihood by taking up what he called one "little business" after another. He was popularly known as the "Captain;" and in consideration of his natural predatory habits, I will venture to introduce him to my readers as Captain Hawk. His style of "little business" consisted in arranging for concessions, acting apparently as principal where it was too dangerous for the real principal to appear; playing the part of spy or detective between business friends at the request of either, or both; dealing in horses and carriages; trying to obtain contracts for large contractors; and introducing people who had "good things" to sell, or valuable ideas to impart, to capitalists likely to invest in them, and *vice versâ*: on all which transactions he received commissions varying in amount—sometimes, indeed, very trifling—or was remunerated in other underhand methods well known to the craft. I don't think he was originally a dishonest man, and he still possessed many amiable and generous

traits—such, for instance, as that of freely lending his friends the money which did not belong to him, and being always ready to put them into “good things,” a service which they rarely returned. The fertility of resource and ingenuity of invention with which this worthy was gifted was something amazing; and I shall never forget the first time I saw myself in manuscript. He was in very low water at the time, and lived in a small lodging in a street off the Strand; but he shared the peculiarity of other members of the same fraternity, of rising and sinking with extraordinary rapidity and facility. There never was anything to equal his elasticity in this respect. The contrast between his gay and jaunty appearance when he was dashing down Piccadilly behind a pair of high-stepping bays, when his luck was good—and the seedy sort of swagger with which, a few months after, in an almost starving condition, he would secretly visit financiers who were ashamed to see him openly,—was a perpetual marvel to me. His external appearance was that of a somewhat dissipated “plunger.” Heavy sandy moustache, from which volumes of smoke perpetually issued, concealed a not unpleasant mouth; and as he wrote me out impregnating me with his filthy tobacco, I remember looking up with astonishment into his calm blue eyes, and wondering how such an apparently vacuous countenance could ever have imagined such a

complicated and incomprehensible prospectus as I felt myself, even in that first dawn of consciousness, to be.

Poor man! he deserved to get something for his trouble; for the effort of producing me cost him hours of concentrated thought, six tumblers of brandy-and-water, and as many cigars; and though, of course, I cannot say I have any recollection of it, I have a dim sort of consciousness that I had, so to speak, been incubating in his brain for many weeks before I saw the light.

At last, after innumerable corrections, modifications, and final polishings, I was folded up, put into his pocket, and entered upon the next stage of my still infantile existence.

This gentleman is known in the phraseology of finance as my *Promoter*; and in spite of his many bad habits and general laxity of morals, after an extensive experience of city men engaged in providing investments for the public and managing them after they have been provided, I am proud to say that I can think of him with a certain feeling of filial tenderness and even respect, for he did not conceal unknown villanies under the guise of respectability: having no profession, he certainly made none; he was contented to live on the outskirts of the society to which he really belonged, instead of forcing his way into the society to which he did not belong—and rather picked up the remnants after the leaders

of the profession had robbed the public, than stole from them himself.

Although I naturally did not know where I was going to, or what the next feature of my existence was to be at the time, it will make it clearer if I explain, which the light of my subsequent experience enables me to do, the plan of my Promoter. In order to give me any real value, it became necessary for him to obtain certain concessions and permissions from foreign Governments and municipalities—for I was a vast conception with ramifications all over Europe, and my success depended upon the construction of divers works involving contracts; in fact, there was a great deal of money to be made out of me by my Promoter, if he was only careful in his manipulation of me in my earlier stages. The first difficulty, and indeed the one, poor man, with which he had most frequently to contend through life, was impecuniosity.

He now stood in need of cash with which to pay his travelling expenses, and which should enable him to deposit the necessary caution money. Now there were two courses open to him: he could either go to a capitalist, explain the merits of the scheme, and go as his agent, having to give an account of his expenses, and receiving a stipulated sum; or he might take a partner from among the unwary youth of the West End.

The objections to the first course were obvious.

The City capitalist would use him and throw him aside with a beggarly remuneration when he had no further need of him. The poor Captain knew this from bitter experience ; but the obstacle in the way of the other course was, that the Captain had exhausted the tribe of fast and rich young men whom he had known in his fashionable days. He could only think of one man with whom he had a chance in this direction ; if this failed, he would have to do the best he could in the City. A few weeks before, he had observed in the papers the death of a rich baronet, who had made his fortune in trade, and whose son had been a cornet in my Promoter's regiment, where he was noted for his weakness of intellect and extreme vanity. This youth had now become Sir Twig Robinson ; and to him with a sanguine and even triumphant air my Promoter addressed himself, though I could feel the sinking presentiment of failure agitating his breast as I pressed against it.

Inexperienced as I then was, I was literally thunderstruck at the skill with which my Promoter flattered, tempted, and cajoled Sir Twig. That young gentleman, inflated with the newly-acquired consciousness of great wealth, was dazzled by the prospect of his name being connected with the brilliant and gigantic enterprise which my Promoter expatiated upon with extraordinary eloquence. Not only was there great profit, but there

was great credit to be got out of it; and if the truth is to be told, with management, there really was both. Sir Twig was, after all, not by any means such a fool for taking me up, as he has been since on many occasions; and he exhibited a certain degree of cunning in the tenacity with which he insisted that if he advanced the whole of the capital necessary for these preliminary expenses, the concessions should be taken out in his name alone. The Captain was afraid of exciting his suspicions if he objected too strongly to this: so it was finally settled, that in consideration of my Promoter undertaking the by no means simple task of securing the concessions and permissions, Sir Twig was to find the money requisite, and the profits were to be equally divided; or, as he elegantly expressed it, "We'll go halves in the pull."

I am obliged, in order not to prolong this veracious history to undue limits, to deprive the reader of the exciting narrative of my adventures in various foreign capitals. Indeed I have some excuse for this; for although I was generally in his pocket, they were not so much my adventures as my Promoter's. He it was who lingered and gambled at Monaco, and justified it afterwards to Sir Twig on the plea that he was obliged to go there in order to meet a lady who was supposed to exercise a paramount influence over a certain well-known minister who dispensed concessions.

An admirable linguist, my Promoter was eminently qualified for the duty on which he was now engaged. His easy assurance secured him a favourable reception in society; and although he was somewhat shyly regarded by our own embassies and legations, he succeeded in winning access to the authorities with whom he had to deal, generally by means of his popularity with the fair sex. My readers would indeed be surprised to learn the names of certain distinguished foreign dames to whose powerful advocacy the Captain owed more than one concession, and whom he, in consideration thereof, allowed to "stand in" for a certain number of fully paid-up shares in the Company when formed. For more than six months did my Promoter dine, bribe, flirt, and intrigue, to his own great content; for he spent Sir Twig's money as freely as if it had been his own, while he graduated his bribes with a most delicate discrimination. It takes a great deal of patience and diplomatic skill to secure a concession; for any small *employé* can put a spoke in the wheel if he is not "squared" in some shape or other, and they know their power but too well. But my Promoter was more than a match for them, and returned triumphantly just as Sir Twig was beginning to take a gloomy view of things, and to think that the whole affair was a *ruse* of the Captain to live luxuriously abroad at his expense. It was with a surly grunt, then, that he

received my Promoter, as the latter, in faultless attire purchased with Sir Twig's money, and with a radiant smile, burst into his room one morning to announce his success.

"I thought you were never coming back," growled Sir Twig. "I suppose you thought there was no occasion to hurry, considering that I was paying the piper. I kept writing to tell you to come back, but you took no notice of my letters; and now you have got these precious concessions, I don't believe they are worth anything. Who is going to buy them? People who know about these things tell me the public are shy of going in for a thing of this sort, and that there is not a chance of its going down."

"Of course it won't go down, my dear Twig," said the Captain, with a delightful impudence.

"Then why did you get the concessions, and what do you propose to do?"

"Form a syndicate, to be sure,—what else should I do?"

"A syndicate! what's that?" asked Sir Twig.

"I'll explain in a moment," replied the Captain; "but before we go any further, we have a little business to settle between us. You will observe that all these concessions are, as you stipulated they should be, taken in your name. Now I want you to sign a little agreement to the effect that whatever money is given for the concessions, if we

sell them, is to be equally divided between us. This is only fair, you know—an ordinary matter of business routine. After you have done that, I'll explain to you the nature and functions of a syndicate."

Sir Twig had a vague feeling that it was never safe to sign his name, but he could see no valid objection to this proposal of the Captain's; and moreover, he felt himself in his ignorance so completely in that plausible gentleman's power, that he did as he was told, with a sigh.

"Now," said the Captain, with a glance of amiable compassion, "I will proceed to teach this young idea how to shoot. We have an invaluable packet here of concessions and permissions. The great object is to induce the confiding country investor to think that his or her future happiness and prosperity depend upon their obtaining possession of them. Now if you or I were to offer them for sale, their reputation for value would be ruined, because the public never look into the intrinsic value of the article to be purchased, but are influenced entirely by the manner in which it is presented to them, and the financial standing of the persons who offer it for sale: a poor, honest man will utterly fail to sell them a good thing in a straightforward way, while they will jump greedily at a bad thing, dangled skilfully before them by a rich rogue. The first thing for us, therefore, to

find, is the rich rogue. He will become the syndicate manager. And his business is to induce a number of gentlemen of the highest standing he can find to become the directors of the new Company, and an eminent contractor to engage to carry out the works, upon the certain assurance that money will be found; and at the same time to induce the public to subscribe the money upon the no less certain assurance that the directors and contractor have been found. This looks like a vicious circle, because you can only obtain one essential condition on the distinct understanding that the other has been already secured."

"And how do you manage to get out of it?" asked Sir Twig.

"Why, we offer the scheme in the first instance, not to the public, but to an influential combination of capitalists called a syndicate."

"But why should the capitalists take the shares which the public will not take?"

"Because," replied the Captain, "they will get them much below their nominal price; and by being only a few holders, and all known to each other, they can put up prices on the Stock Exchange, and easily rig the market, and then clear out at a profit."

"Excuse my stupidity," said Sir Twig; "but how do they rig the market?"

"That is very simple. A says to B, don't sell

your shares under ten per cent premium. I will buy them publicly at that price through a broker, if you will privately give me back my money afterwards, and take back your shares. The next day B buys from A, and so on. This keeps up the price on the official quotations on the Exchange, and the outside investor comes in and buys; then the syndicate can quietly unload."

"I see," said Sir Twig, with more humour than I gave him credit for; "it seems to me that this syndicate, as you call it, is itself the 'vicious circle' of which you were talking just now; but where shall we find a syndicate who will be sufficiently respectable to inspire confidence, and yet be guilty of such practices?"

"My innocent Twig, have you lived so long in this world," said the Captain, with calm superiority, "and not found out yet that confidence in matters of finance is not inspired because a man deserves it, but because he has accumulated vast wealth by a long and successful career of fraud? Leave this to me—I will find the syndicate: they will pay for the concessions; and whether they are afterwards 'stuck' with the shares, or succeed in palming them off on the public, surely does not concern us."

"And how much shall we ourselves make out of it?" asked Sir Twig, with an eye to the main chance.

"Can't say. We shall ask £250,000, and prob-

ably take £50,000, which makes £25,000 each. However, put yourself unreservedly into my hands, my dear Twig, and you won't have any reason to complain." Saying which, the Captain nodded in a reassuring manner, took up his hat, and swaggered off, soliloquising thus as he went along. From my advantageous position in his breast-pocket I could hear him plainly.

"This little matter looks tolerably healthy. I shall get £25,000 for my half of the concession. Considering I deposited no caution money, and I bled Twig pretty freely in the matter of expenses, I shan't lose on that. If I introduce my syndicate man to a good contractor, the latter will have to pay me at least one per cent commission on the contract price, which certainly does not concern my Twig. After all, he has only paid £15,000 in caution money and expenses, and he will make, without any exertion of brain, £20,000 on that, which, considering that he has no brains to exert, ought to satisfy him."

I wondered, as we went along, where my Promoter was going to, but was soon enlightened, as he turned into some handsome offices, and I observed the names of Chisel Bros., the well-known contractors, on the door. Mr Chisel was engaged; but my Promoter waited patiently to see the great man, who was evidently in no hurry to see him, and made him a cold, suspicious bow, as he offered

him a chair. "What I am about to say," remarked the Captain, with the bold assurance of one about to confer a favour, "must be considered absolutely private and confidential. A certain friend of mine, who is of the highest respectability, and moves in the first social circles,—in fact I may tell you, under the pledge of secrecy, that he is a baronet,—is the possessor of certain most valuable concessions"—here the Captain explained in general terms their nature, and went on,—“Now I have come to tell you that some City friends of mine, a most powerful combination of capitalists—men, I need scarcely say, of first-class financial standing, as you would yourself acknowledge if I was permitted to divulge their names—are inclined to take up the scheme. I thought that the project was one which would just suit you, and that if you felt inclined to undertake the contract, it would be useful to you to be introduced to the capitalists interested. I should be glad to present you to them; but in order to be able to talk to my friends, I should be happy to know what your prices are for carrying out the proposed works.”

Mr Chisel here fixed my Promoter with his eye, and asked him bluntly for the names of his financial friends. With an air of profound secrecy, but with an appearance of absolute *bonâ fides*, the Captain as steadily returned the glance, as he replied, “I have already said I am not at liberty to give you their

names ; but if you keep it entirely secret, I may say this, that one of the partners of Cash, Bullion, & Co. is interested in the matter." I literally trembled in his pocket as my Promoter uttered this unblushing falsehood ; but he evidently knew his man. The name of the firm, combined with the imperturbable calm of the Captain's manner, seemed to affect the contractor ; and with a furtive side glance at him, he said, as he carelessly turned over the leaves of a book on the table, "Do you want our prices net, or will they include any commissions ?"

"They will include one per cent commission for me," replied the Captain, coolly, but firmly.

Mr Chisel seemed prepared for this, and quietly dismissed his visitor with the assurance that he would soon hear from him, and that he would make an estimate of the prices.

My Promoter instantly hurried eastward, murmuring as he went, "Chisel bites—and so he ought, for there has not been a sounder or a better thing put on the market this long time ; now the only thing is to find the powerful combination of capitalists I told Chisel I had found already. I suppose there is not a chance of Cash, Bullion, & Co. going into it. But, confound it ! when he pressed me so hard, I had to give some name, and under those circumstances there is no reason why one should not give the best ; but I must see them first, just to save

appearances if Chisel ever calls on me to explain my statements." And to Cash, Bullion, & Co. he accordingly went. A frigid reception and still more frigid refusal was all he got there; but he seemed rather to enjoy the joke than otherwise, and, with a chuckle to himself, proceeded in quest of that less scrupulous class amongst whom he knew that his powerful combination could alone be found.

I will not weary my reader with a narrative of all the conversations to which I listened during the various visits which my Promoter now paid; and, indeed, if I have been obliged to go into so much detail hitherto, it has been because it is impossible to convey any just idea of how these negotiations are carried on without it. First he tried Squeezer, a powerful man well known in the world of finance; but though he acknowledged the excellence of the scheme, his terms were too high, and it was evident that he would be satisfied with nothing less than the lion's share. This worthy had been successful in bringing out about a hundred companies, at least ninety of which had since become bankrupt, though he himself had realised an immense fortune in giving birth to them. Next he dangled me in vain before the eyes of Shaver, who generally victimised his dupes with a joke, but who, at this particular juncture, had too many irons in the fire to take me up. He was unable to come

to terms with Rigger, because that gentleman demanded that £60,000 should be set aside out of the preliminary expenses for "making a market," which, as the Captain has already explained, consisted in dealing in the shares of the future Company, the moment the prospectus had appeared, and before the shares had been allotted, at figures much above what would have been taken for them except from purchasers eager to maintain a fictitious high price; which operation, the Captain knew, was ordinarily carried out at about one-sixth of the money asked by Rigger, who intended to pocket the balance. This process seemed to me not only novel, but immoral; but when I saw the evidence which was taken the other day before the Foreign Loans Committee, I found it was as common in the floating of foreign loans, as in the bringing out of joint-stock companies. Sharper seemed more hopeful, and at one time I thought we should come to terms; but he had his own contractor; and my Promoter, fearing the loss of his commission, hurriedly terminated the interview, and pushed on in search of some more pliant gentleman.

I was surprised at the number of his acquaintances: without describing them *seriatim*, I may give a general outline of our mode of procedure. We always seemed desirous to shun observation, and to approach the great man we were in quest of as quietly as possible. The very clerks seemed

to entertain a certain feeling of contempt for us, and knowing looks passed between them as my Promoter's card was taken to the sanctum of the millionaire. At first I used to feel this humiliation; but as I saw my inventor was perfectly stolid, I soon ceased to feel sensitive on the subject. On no one occasion that I remember were we at once admitted, but generally kept waiting in some dingy little back room for an hour or two, during which time my Promoter was preparing his part. I now, to my great delight, became aware, by the contrast which his manner presented to the personages to whom I was submitted for inspection, that my Promoter was a gentleman. There was a delicate combination of dignity, mystery, and reserve which struck me as very effective; and I used to wonder how any one could resist the low persuasive tones and explicit definitions with which my great advantages were described. I even myself really believed that I should be the means of making the fortunes of all who had anything to do with me; and felt quite irritated at the cold suspicious manner in which my merits were treated, the objections which were raised to me, and the evident doubt with which I was often regarded. The peculiarity of all these magnates seemed to be that they were very purse-proud, very grasping, very overbearing, and generally more or less vulgar; the richer they were, and the more convinced they

became that I really was of some intrinsic value, the more unreasonable they seemed to get, and I quite sympathised with my poor Promoter's repeated disappointments. By degrees he dropped from the eminent financier to the eminent stockbroker, from the eminent stockbroker to the doubtful financier, and from the doubtful financier to the German Jew; and it was amongst this latter fraternity that at last he found a man willing to take me up. His name was Mire. He was a person of great activity, great perseverance, parsimonious habits, grasping in his transactions, and one who, although possessed of a great affection for all the members of his family scattered about in various countries, was not averse to cheating them when he could realise a respectable margin thereby. He took me up coolly at first, but grew warmer and warmer over me as he spent some time in considering my merits. Finally, he told the Captain that he would give him an answer on the following day; as he wanted to consult his solicitors, the eminent firm of Twister, Wriggle, Sly, & Wriggle.

The Captain occupied the interval by seeing Chisel's manager, explaining to him that Mire had taken up the affair, and that circumstances had arisen in consequence which made it advisable that Cash, Bullion, & Co. should not be mixed up in it; and he received from the manager the prices which had been promised, and a great deal of technical

information, primed with which he kept his appointment with Mire. That gentleman began by making difficulties, said that the public were not ripe for enterprises of the sort, that the capital wanted was very large, the state of the market very bad (the Captain happened to know that the market had never been more buoyant), and that it would be difficult to find a good contractor willing to take it up. At this point the Captain interrupted with great effect, and poured out his recently acquired knowledge with a volubility which somewhat disconcerted Mire, to whom he explained that for certain technical reasons connected with the nature of the works, there was in fact only one contractor in England who was really competent to carry out so magnificent and gigantic an enterprise, but that he fortunately was prepared to undertake it practically without making his legitimate profit, as it was indispensable to him to crush a rival firm, who were seriously threatening his pre-eminence in that particular line. Mire gave a deliberate wink, as if he distrusted this latter piece of intelligence; but his intense desire to get a good bargain overruled his better judgment, and he relented. After a prolonged negotiation, in which some very pretty fencing took place, showing great wariness, coolness, steadiness of purpose, and self-control on both sides Mire agreed to take up the matter and to form a syndicate, on condition that he

should be syndicate manager. The following terms were agreed upon: The contract was given to Messrs Chisel Bros. Mire here asked, "What is the price net?" The Captain replied, £1,500,000. "I understand you," said Mr Mire, "to say this is absolutely net?"

"Absolutely," said the Captain, with a calmness which caused me a painful feeling of distress, well knowing as I did that it included one per cent commission to himself. After a long and searching look into the Captain's inscrutable physiognomy, Mr Mire seemed evidently satisfied, and said, with a knowing look, "My dear sir, have you mentioned this price to anybody but me?"

"I have not," rejoined the Captain.

"Then," said Mire, "let us tell the contractors they must ask for £1,515,000. I must have something for my trouble."

"I presume," blandly remarked the Captain, "one-third of this will go to me."

Mire seemed to undergo a convulsion; he sprang from his chair and violently paced the room. "I thought, sir," at last he remarked, planting himself firmly before the Captain, "that you acted on behalf of the concessionaire, and you will have to look to that gentleman for your remuneration."

"Very well," drily replied the Captain. "As nobody knows what the contractor's net price really is, if you make any difficulty about my standing in,

I shall take care that the contractor will refuse to ask for a higher price than the one he actually receives. Indeed, although I am aware that this practice is not uncommon with other contractors, it will be difficult in this case, anyhow, to induce so respectable a firm to consent to it."

Finally, it was arranged as a first condition that the Captain would agree to overcome the contractor's scruples on this point for a percentage of one-sixth of the commission to be given by the contractor to Mr Mire. Second, that Mr Mire should be syndicate manager, which post, as it afterwards turned out, involved a variety of commissions. Third, that the concessions of Sir Twig Robinson should be bought for £50,000. On this point there was also considerable haggling, the Captain having begun by asking £150,000 for the concessions. "The little business" being so far settled, Mr Mire produced a box of cigars and a bottle of capital sherry; and, fifteen minutes later, the Captain left the office in high spirits, with the promise of an interview with Mr Mire on the following day at his solicitor's. From all of which you will perceive, O my investing readers, how much trouble it takes to prepare the gandy fly by which you are ultimately to be hooked. Nobody knows what running about, and worry, and meetings, and appointments, and disappointments, and wrangling, are involved in the promotion of a company—what patience it re-

quires, what constant watchfulness, lest by one false move the labours of months are neutralised, and the profits swept away by a stroke of sharp practice on the part of a friend and a brother. My Promoter's anxiety of mind during this trying period involved a perpetual recourse to stimulants, and he almost lived in Hansom cabs.

His next interview with Mire was in the office of the eminent solicitors already alluded to. There he met a small closely-shaved gentleman, with sharp pinched features and an oily manner—Mr Wriggle, to wit; and there also were present several of Mr Mire's powerful financial friends, whose names are of no importance. For many successive days did this little group meet in close conclave, their principal duty being to write to, and produce their correspondence with, their financial friends abroad, whom they had urged to join them in the enterprise, and become members of the syndicate, and who wished to be informed in regard to sundry details. At one of these meetings the contractor and his solicitor appeared on the scene. The contractor insisted that the whole of the capital of the intended Company should be "taken firm" by the syndicate before the prospectus was issued; which, I find out, means, that the various financial gentlemen who form the syndicate are required to sign a letter, which is called a syndicate letter. The skeleton of this letter ran as follows:—

The X. Y. Z. Co. (Limited).

(Of course my real name was given here.)

To be incorporated under the Companies Acts 1862
and 1867.

Capital £——, in one hundred thousand
shares of £— each.

To the Manager of the Syndicate.

Sir,—We authorise you to place our name on the syndicate for raising the cash capital of this Company for a subscription of £—. We understand that Sir Twig Robinson, Bart., is prepared to sell several valuable concessions from foreign Governments and municipalities for the sum of £——, and that Messrs Chisel Bros. are prepared to enter into a contract for the construction of at a total contract price of £—— in cash, and £—— in fully paid-up shares of the Company. We guarantee to the extent of our subscription the raising of the whole of the above-mentioned capital of £——; and further, that if the whole of such capital shall not within one month from the date hereof be otherwise applied for, the members of the syndicate will themselves subscribe for a sufficient number of shares to make good the deficiency; on the understanding that, by way of remuneration for our trouble and influence in establishing and bringing out the Company, and in raising the capital, and as a consideration for our entering into the

above-mentioned undertaking, Messrs Chisel Bros. will pay to bankers to be agreed upon on behalf of the syndicate, a sum of £——, which is equivalent to seventeen per cent of the capital of the Company, that sum to be appropriated as follows: Two per cent on the capital or the sum of £—— to be paid to the syndicate manager for syndicate management and expenses, and the remaining fifteen per cent or £—— to be divisible *pro rata* among the members of the syndicate.—We are, Sir, your obedient servants.

This somewhat complicated document was printed and shown to the eminent financiers assembled, in a guarded manner, as productions of this sort are of too delicate a character to leave the hands of the initiated few who are promoting the Company. Its real purport only became clear to me after I had overheard the following explanation of it by the Captain to Sir Twig, to whom he showed a copy of the letter, the intelligence of the hon. baronet being quite unequal to grasping its meaning on a bare perusal.

“My dear fellow,” said Sir Twig, after having laboriously endeavoured to master its contents, “you might as well have expected me to understand an Egyptian papyrus as this long-winded yarn. What does it all mean?”

“Well, Twig, it becomes plain enough when

you have had as much to do with promotion work as I have. We want to be paid for the concession ; it is an essential preliminary to this that the capital of the Company be found : if you advertise the prospectus, the public may or may not subscribe to it. To make it a certainty, we find a small lot of financiers first, which, as I before explained, is called a Syndicate, to subscribe for the whole of the shares. The shares are then offered to the public for subscription. Whatever amount is applied for by the public is allotted to them at par ; whatever amount remains is taken up by the members of the syndicate, in the proportion of their original subscription, so that a man who figures in the syndicate as a subscriber for one-tenth of the capital has to take one-tenth of the shares which have not been subscribed for by the public. In consideration for this risk he receives a syndicate commission of, say, fifteen per cent on the whole of his original subscription in the syndicate ; so that if he has subscribed £50,000, and the public take all the shares, he receives £7500 for having affixed his name to a syndicate letter, and without having disbursed a farthing. If the public subscribe half, he receives the same commission, but has to take up £25,000 worth of shares, and so on."

"That is clear so far," said Twig ; "but I don't see who is to pay them the fifteen per cent. Who do they get it out of—the public?"

“Of course out of the public in the long run, but in the first instance out of the contractor. It is clear that the Company cannot openly allot shares to the public at par, and to the syndicate at 85. That would be illegal. The situation therefore has to be turned. This is easily managed by sticking the syndicate commission secretly into the contract price which appears in the public prospectus; and the contractor equally secretly hands back this commission to the syndicate when he receives his first instalment from the Company.”

After many days spent in negotiation and preliminary haggling over further details too minute and complicated for me to go into here, and sundry financial firms had risen freely at the tempting bait offered to them, some boldly dashing at it, others shyly coquetting with it, a certain number were sufficiently firmly hooked to be brought to the point of signing; and a meeting was held of all those intending to become members of the syndicate with the contractor, the Promoter, Mire's solicitor, who was to become the solicitor of the Company, and the contractor's solicitor.

The syndicate was to consist of upwards of seventy members, of whom, however, only thirteen attended, acting for themselves and their friends. Mr Mire had in the meantime prepared and finally settled the memorandum and articles of association of the future Company — a contract for the

conveyance of the various concessions of Sir Twig Robinson to the new Company, and the contract to be entered into between Messrs Chisel Bros. on the one part, and Mr Mire, acting on behalf of and for the future Company, on the other part, and a deed of transfer of such contract from Mr Mire to the future Company.

Printed copies of all these documents were profusely scattered over the table. Their backs were neatly lined with red tape, as though to impart an air of respectability to their contents.

While they were assembling, these gentlemen collected in groups and talked finance until they were called to order by a sort of admonitory cough from Mr Mire, who took a chair which happened to be at the top of the table, and addressed the meeting as follows :—

"Well, gentlemen, you are all aware of the nature of the business which has brought us together to-day : the valuable concessions of Sir Twig Robinson, who is represented by our friend Captain Hawk, are to be taken over by the Company which we propose to form. Mr Wriggle, the deeds of transfer are, I presume, in order?"

Mr Wriggle nodded assent. "The contract with Messrs Chisel Brothers," pursued Mr Mire, "has been in your hands for the past week, and I should be glad of any observations referring thereto which any of you, gentlemen, might desire to make."

At this moment a funereal-looking individual in a suit of black, gaunt and scraggy, with high cheek-bones and a sanctimonious expression of countenance, interposed and said in unctuous tones, which seemed rather more appropriate to a meeting in a dissenting chapel than of a syndicate Committee:—

“It appears to me that the 45th clause of the contract does not sufficiently provide for the penalty to be incurred by the contractor in case of the completion of the works being delayed for more than two days beyond the time specified in clause three. I observe that the contractor is not bound to pay any forfeits, not only in the case of an interference by *force majeure*, to which, of course, nobody amongst us could object,” and he threw a glance reverently upwards, “but also in the case of a strike amongst his workmen; it appears to me that in a Christian country like ours, it is utterly unnecessary if not injurious to public morality to secure the contractor against a contingency which cannot arise if he chooses his workmen only among converted and God-fearing men.”

The contractor maintained that this observation was founded on a fallacy, and that his experience had proved to him that workmen were pretty much alike when it came to the question of a rise in their wages, no matter what their professions might be.

The contractor’s solicitor here interfered, and produced a number of similar contracts entered

into with other companies which all contained the same clause, and to which no such objection had ever before been taken. It was finally overruled. The gaunt gentleman observed that there were a great many other points in the contract to which he could not assent, and he proposed therefore to take the contract clause by clause. As his name was down on the syndicate list for by far the largest amount, no serious objection could be raised to this. It would weary the reader, as it certainly did the syndicate, were I to attempt to enumerate the objections raised by this perverse and pious millionaire to almost every point contained in the contract. He was only finally interrupted by a portly and jovial-looking personage declaring he felt faint, and that it was time to adjourn for lunch. At this meal the contractor managed cleverly to sit next the lugubrious objector, whose name was Sarmist, and a whispered conversation took place between them, which I managed to overhear, and which resulted in a secret offer from the contractor of a commission of two per cent on the contract price if the scruples of that high-minded man could be overcome on all the points raised by him, and the contract could be admitted as it stood now. Mr Sarmist rejoined that two per cent was not enough, and that he could not possibly waive his scruples for less than three. I now understood the motive which had prompted his obstructive

conduct throughout. The contractor refused absolutely to accede to this, feeling sure that the other was only "trying it on," and would ultimately take two.

The sherry at luncheon seemed to have a salutary effect upon the transaction of the business, for Mr Sarmist retained an attitude of dogged silence during the subsequent proceedings, while the jovial gentleman was smoothing away difficulties and winning over waverers whose natural dispositions were not so sanguine as his own, until, as the day closed in, the meeting was adjourned, and everybody seemed to feel a certain amount of relief in the reflection that matters had been nearly brought to a head, and that one more sitting would at last give me definite existence, crown the hopes of my Promoter, and line the pockets in various proportions of the gentlemen who so kindly and disinterestedly invented for the public its latest want, and now modestly undertook the means of supplying it.

It was proposed to meet again on the following day. Mr Sarmist, however, with an expression of profound regret, announced that a meeting at Exeter Hall demanded his presence, and begged those present, in solemn tones, to adjourn reassembling for two days. This was agreed to. With a light and buoyant step my Promoter wended his way homewards. He calculated as he did so what this,

his last venture, was likely to prove worth to him. The schedule which he worked out in his mind, if put on paper, would read thus :—

Price of concession,	.	.	.	£50,000
Old Twig out of pocket,	.	.	.	15,000
Leaves to be divided,	.	.	.	£35,000
Half of that for me,	.	.	.	£17,500
One per cent on contract price,	.	.	.	15,000
One-sixth of old Jew's commission,	.	.	.	2,500
Total,	.	.	.	£35,000

As this figure presented itself to his imagination, a radiant smile overspread his countenance, and I felt his heart beat faster with the throb of pleasant anticipation. For a moment, but only for a moment, this feeling was checked by the sad recollection of the numerous former occasions on which a cup equally overflowing had been rudely dashed from his lips; but he regained confidence as he recalled the instant when his sharp eye detected the contractor in secret conversation with Mr Sarmist, and the change which it effected in that pious gentleman's subsequent demeanour.

I must here remind my reader that having been printed in so many forms, I now filled the pockets of all the syndicate members, and that it was owing to this circumstance that I overheard the following conversation in Mr Mire's office.

That gentleman was engaged in fixing his valuable signature to sundry invoices for a large cargo of tallow, when Mr Sarmist's name was announced by a seedy-looking junior clerk with a hooked nose. Mr Mire quietly turned on their faces all the letters which happened to be lying open before him on his desk, and signified his willingness to receive his visitor.

"I have come to speak to you, Mr Mire," said that gentleman, with whom it had been my misfortune to be present at the meeting which we had just quitted at Exeter Hall, "about the contracts to be entered into for the X. Y. Z. Co. I have received distressing information this morning that several of my Continental friends have changed their minds about joining the syndicate, as they first intended. This would entail (if the Company for which we are working is to succeed) the contractor's taking a certain amount of his price in fully paid-up shares. From confidential inquiries which I have had made, it appears that Chisel Brothers, though excellent contractors, have already rather more paper than they like, and that they would hardly be in a position to take anything but a cash contract. I have called, therefore, on Messrs Gouge & Co., limited, who are willing to execute the works for £1,350,000 in cash, and £250,000 in shares."

"This is about £100,000 more," Mr Mire replied,

"than Messrs Chisel Brothers have asked; and as to their taking part of the contract price in shares, I have no doubt whatever that they could make as favourable terms as Gouge & Co.; besides, Mr Sarmist," he added, with a grave countenance, "it would be hardly fair and business-like—and certainly injurious to my reputation for straightforward dealing—to throw over at the last moment a contractor with whom we have gone so far."

After a good deal of skirmishing, Mr Sarmist, who seemed to have good reason for preferring Messrs Gouge & Co., limited, drew his chair close up to Mr Mire's, and having assured himself that the door was locked, said to him—

"I may tell you, my dear sir, that in point of fact their price is rather lower than Chisel's, being only £1,250,000 in cash, and a quarter of a million in shares—£100,000 being available for distribution amongst their friends."

"In cash, or in shares?" asked Mr Mire.

"In cash," replied Mr Sarmist, watching the effect that this announcement would produce upon his antagonist.

"Well," said Mr Mire, "this looks like business: how much of that would go to me?"

"Half," responded the other.

"Done," said Mire, unhesitatingly.

My heart sank when I thought of my poor Promoter's schedule, and heard this nefarious bargain

struck. The two worthies then engaged in minute calculations as to the distribution of the funds. It was found absolutely necessary to reduce the price of the concession to £25,000. This gave me another pang on the unlucky Captain's behalf; and for the first time I became aware that the *concessionaires* were practically powerless, and that those who had most capital at their backs really divided the spoil, and dictated their terms to everybody else. After a long and close confabulation, a schedule was drawn up and agreed to between Messrs Mire and Sarmist.

This version of the schedule was, as a matter of course, kept perfectly secret between the two gentlemen, who, with a smile of mutual respect, congratulated each other upon "standing in on the ground-floor," as they significantly expressed it. A second schedule was then prepared for the benefit of the syndicate and *concessionaires*, to be submitted to them at the meeting on the following day. This body was only to be allowed to stand in on the next floor, and of course knew nothing of what took place on the ground-floor. And lastly, a third schedule was prepared to form the basis of the prospectus which was to be offered to the *bonâ fide* investors among a confiding public, who naturally were not to be allowed to stand in on any floor.

I give the three schedules side by side for the better edification of this last class of my readers, who will appreciate their position on the tiles.

Fair female investor, youthful scion of nobility, confiding officer on half-pay, gentle curate, dull squire, do not turn from an examination of this dreadful-looking sheet of figures because it is dry and complicated, but try and understand the explanation I am now going to give of it. You will see from the first column how a company is started with a capital of £2,000,000 to get works done which only cost £1,500,000, to acquire concessions which cost £25,000, and to retain a working capital of £45,000. The difference of £430,000 is spent as follows: £100,000 are absorbed by what Mr Sarmist delicately styles X X X, in order not to do violence to his own religious sentiments, but by what is called, according to the individual tastes of financing men, "loot," "plunder," "faux frais" (an expression used by the more travelled and cosmopolitan financiers), "pull," "swim," and "margin." In the particular instance you are investigating, the Jew and the Christian each stole half of this amount, which rightfully belonged to my shareholders.

From this example you will perceive that the highest aim of every financier engaged in work of this description is "to stand in on the ground-floor." £297,500 were spent in a syndicate commission, the nature of which my Promoter has already carefully explained to Sir Twig; £20,000 were spent in "making a market"—a swindling

process also I hope made clear to you. Lawyers, brokers, advertising agents, and a small contingency fund, absorbed legitimately enough £2000, £3000, £5000, and £500 respectively: and £2000 were distributed among the gentlemen of the independent press, in order to impress them favourably with my undoubted merits. The greater part of this sum, however, was refused by all the more respectable members of journalism, and Mire and Sarmist of course pocketed what remained. The second schedule only differs in so far from the first that the contract appears to be £100,000 higher, as this amount, which has already been secretly appropriated by the two gentlemen living on the ground-floor, could not be disclosed to the lodgers on the floor above. The third schedule differs very widely from the two former, as it only contains what can in common decency be mentioned to the public. The contractor here appears as taking for his contract, and for preliminary expenses, a sum which exceeds his real price by exactly £430,000; and many a time, when his friends congratulated him upon his gigantic enterprises and advantageous contracts, he mournfully thought to himself how little of the first instalment of his nominal price ever found its way into his banker's account. However, he had no reason to complain, because when my works came to be made I found to my surprise that they really did not quite cost a million. So

that, for doing work which, in fact, scarcely cost a million, and for holding his tongue about what happened to the other half million, he was paid a million and a half.

Hence my total capital came to be two millions.

On the following day, the powerful influence of Mire and Sarmist carried their scheme. The syndicate did not raise much objection to the change of contractor, as they got their seventeen per cent. The poor Captain, who neither got his one per cent from Chisel Brothers nor his part of Mire's commission from the same firm—they having been dropped at the eleventh hour—and who only got at last £25,000 instead of £50,000 for the concessions, saw his bright dream of £35,000 vanish, and found himself a winner of only £5000 on the whole transaction. Sir Twig, of course, received the same, but immediately lost it at the next Derby. Chisel never forgave himself for having gauged his man so badly, and not having been more wary in his dealings with one so profuse in Christian profession as Mr Sarmist; and his former antagonism to Gouge & Co., Limited, has derived a bitterness all the more intense because he so nearly carried off the prize himself.

This practically terminated my existence as an embryo. I shortly after saw the light of day, and received my formal name at the hands of the Registrar of Joint-Stock Companies.

One more step, however, had to be taken on my behalf before I could be introduced in a complete shape to the investing British public. My Board had not yet been constituted, and my success now mainly depended upon the air of respectability which might be imparted to me by the names of the gentlemen who could be induced to sit on it. Messrs Mire and Sarmist were, of course, among the number ; but unfortunately their names inspired no confidence in the City, and were utterly unknown anywhere else. It became necessary to find persons who possessed the two rare and valued attributes of a director—a high social standing, and an entire ignorance of business : this latter somewhat negative quality being thought indispensable by Mire and Sarmist, to enable them to exchange their functions as members and managers of the syndicate, for the equally dignified and not less lucrative position of wire-pullers—in other words, they wished to retain in their own hands the control of the Company's fortunes for the purpose of manipulating its operations with a view to their own private aggrandisement.

The process of forming a Board has been so recently revealed in the columns of the daily press, that it is not necessary for me to go into any detail in regard to it. I was no exception to the general rule. A noble lord, an ex-Minister of a foreign State, a Right Honourable, a General K.C.B., and four Members of Parliament, were secured mainly by the

exertions of a well-connected young man of fashion, who received the usual commission ; and duly qualified themselves by accepting a present of the necessary number of fully paid-up shares, in return for the dazzling effect which it was confidently and not unreasonably anticipated their names would produce upon the country public. It is due to these gentlemen to say that they were so firmly convinced of their own value, that it did not occur to them that there was anything wrong in selling themselves in this way ; and I have always felt that any reflection upon their honesty was most unfair. It is natural that a duped public should be indignant with every one connected with the cause of their disasters, but let me assure you that nearly all these gentlemen sinned purely through ignorance and indiscretion. I found them invariably struggling to be honest all the time they were on my Board, and vainly attempting to comprehend and thwart the nefarious schemes of Mire and Sarmist. That they did not succeed, and ultimately drew upon themselves the anathemas of an exasperated public, was the result of being tempted by a plausible touter, with the prospect of increasing their limited incomes, into engaging in matters of which they had no experience, and of a certain fascination which the idea of directorial responsibility and dignity exercises upon certain weak minds.

A prospectus setting forth my merits in the most

glowing terms, and promising a return of unheard-of dividends, was now printed in all the papers, and freely circulated through the means of an advertising agency, which had a list of all the names of unhappy shareholders in other companies. So well was my prospectus drawn, so overwhelming was the brilliancy of my Board, that my shares were greedily subscribed for; and I found myself established in handsome offices, with a board-room which became a favourite lounge with sundry of my directors, and a manager, secretary, and an array of clerks and officials which made me the envy of my neighbours. I need scarcely say that my manager was the nominee of Mire and Sarmist. This gentleman possessed an invaluable *physique*; his flowing grey locks, and general air of matured sagacity and intense respectability, which he heightened by wearing a white tie, produced an invariably reassuring effect upon shareholders. But he lived in a perpetual thralldom, for he was bound with chains which had been dexterously thrown round him by the two cunning intriguers to whom he owed his position, and who, while they never allowed him to forget the debt of gratitude he was under, had taken care to place him still more absolutely in their power by the loan of one thousand pounds, which his extravagant habits made it impossible for him to think of repaying.

We were now in a position to usher in our pros-

perous career by a magnificent banquet. This was by no means an original idea. Messrs Mire and Sarmist had already upon previous occasions proved by experience the splendid effect which a display of this kind has upon the public, and no pains were spared to secure the presence of a distinguished company; the services of the young gentleman who had helped to provide the directors were again in request, and the result was a plentiful sprinkling of noble lords, scientific men, distinguished *litterateurs* and gentlemen of the press, city capitalists, and Members of Parliament. There was the usual amount of speech-making, consisting mainly of mutual compliments which were paid by the scientific gentlemen to the capitalists on their wonderful enterprise, and by the capitalists to the scientific men on their no less remarkable attainments; the General K.C.B. returned thanks in a facetious speech for the army, which thus found itself unexpectedly allied to commerce and science; the peers whose presence "graced the auspicious occasion" felt themselves "honoured by being allowed to take part in an undertaking which reflected so much credit upon the spirit and enterprise of Englishmen;" and the Member of the House of Commons who responded for that body, committed it recklessly in all future time to watch over and protect my interests; the literary men pretended that they regarded with envy the more distinguished career on which their fellow-

countrymen had entered; and the gentleman who replied to the toast in behalf of the fifth estate, was profuse in his eulogium of Messrs Mire and Sarmist, and in his predictions of the future success of the company,—all which proceedings were duly chronicled in the papers of the following morning, as my readers may verify by an examination of the press of the period.

The sober, and as it would appear to the world the legitimate work of the undertaking of which I was the embodiment, now commenced. The works were executed one by one, as the shareholders were informed at the first public meeting, in the most brilliant and satisfactory manner; but frequent discussions between the contractor and my Board convinced me that the former was endeavouring to do as little as possible for the price, and was attempting to put on "extras" whenever opportunity offered. A period of about a year and a half was thus spent, at the expiration of which time my works were completed, and I entered upon my functions as a public benefactor. My operations were a decided success, in spite of the high remuneration set aside for the directors' services, and of the appointment of a numerous staff of ignorant connections and nominees of the directors, irreverently termed by the really efficient *employés* "Directors' puppies." My intrinsic merits were so great that large receipts were taken,

and there was every prospect of a high dividend being paid at an early date.

I was surprised to find that my anxious shareholders were by no means well informed by my Board as to my excellent prospects, but that profound secrecy was maintained in regard to my actual position. From the frequent conversations which I overheard between my manager and sundry gentlemen who rushed in and out of his office gaily dressed, and with a noisy and impudent air—whom I, by degrees, discovered to be brokers—I became aware, to my intense regret, that my shares were being freely knocked up and down in the market; and after having listened to frequent extraordinary conversations carried on in the slang peculiar to all engaged in Stock Exchange transactions, I finally realised that Mire and Sarmist were *alternately* becoming what they styled “bulls” or “bears” of my shares. They carried out their operations by spreading rumours sometimes detrimental, sometimes favourable to my interests. They never failed to take advantage of the turn of the market which had thus been influenced by them. Their best *coup* was made immediately prior to the declaration of my first dividend. My earnings had been so large that a high dividend should have been paid. Mire and Sarmist, however, obstinately insisted upon the absolute necessity of laying by a large reserve fund; and so

strongly objected to what they termed "stuffing shareholders with dividends," that for some time it really appeared that only a low dividend would be declared. This prospect, of course, soon finding its way into the Stock Exchange, depressed my shares considerably. Mire and Sarmist thereupon bought largely, and relented at the next Board meeting in their objections to a high dividend, which was eventually declared. My shares flew up with a bound, and the clever pair cleared out with a large profit.

Up to this time my career had, although not free from the influence of all the refined forms of swindling which our advanced civilisation makes possible, and almost encourages, been one of unbroken prosperity. Indeed my success was so palpable that rumours soon reached me of a competing company being promoted. My old friend the Captain easily overcame the scruples of Messrs Gouge & Co., who at first thought it unfair to assist in starting an opposition company to the one out of which they had made so much profit; and after the usual sharp practice, and the many vicissitudes of promotion had been successfully encountered, my competitor was at last fairly started.

The state of terror which was now created amongst my Board was pitiable to behold; while Mire and Sarmist experienced the most intense indignation at anybody's daring to invade what

they considered their private field of enterprise. These two worthies, however, eventually consoled themselves when they found a congenial friend on the Board of the rival company in the person of Sir Verrikute Trimmer, who made common cause with them, furnished them with all possible information regarding my young enemy in return for being well supplied with the latest news about my own health and circumstances; and they all three operated cleverly in harmony, so as effectually to plunder the shareholders in both companies. When my competitor's works were completed a brisk competition ensued. My rival's Board addressed themselves to the public in the capacity of general benefactors—the same work which had been performed by me at a remunerative rate to my shareholders was to be done by my new-born rival much more cheaply. The effect of this was a great loss to both of us, and a consequent fall in our shares. This went on for some time; everybody connected with either of us, whether shareholder or director, felt profoundly miserable. Even the very managers, who, as enjoying fixed salaries, cared little for the amount of the dividends earned, began to yield to the general feeling of gloom; only the recently-constituted triumvirate of Mire and Sarmist on my Board, and Sir Verrikute on the other, chuckled and rubbed their hands in an unostentatious and modest sort of way as they agreed upon

one move after the other, which had the effect of still further depressing our revenues, and proportionately drove down our shares. All this time the three conspirators were heavy "bears," and made large amounts.

It was during this period that I for the first time understood what it meant to be a bear. The process of operation is as follows: Sir Verrikute, for instance, operating for joint account as a bear, calls into his sanctum in his City abode, one fine morning, one of his junior clerks. "Mr Jones," says the chief, "will you send for one of the partners of Contango, Backwardation, & Margin, and tell them to sell £100,000 of X. Y. Z. for you." Mr Jones, who is a rosy-cheeked, guileless youth, with a flower in his button-hole, drops his not over-intelligent countenance very considerably indeed. "Beg your pardon, sir; sell what?" "Send for the broker," says Sir Verrikute, gruffly; "I want *you* to sell a bear." The broker arrives, and Mr Jones tells him—having been ordered to do so by his chief—to sell for him, Jones, £100,000 worth of X. Y. Z. shares, wondering all the time how on earth he could sell such a fortune in securities of which he never owned a single pound's worth in his life. Nor had his principal the shares either in his possession. The intelligent transaction simply consisted in this: Sir Verrikute sold through an impecunious clerk, who acted as

nominee, £100,000 of X. Y. Z. shares which he did not possess. The purchaser paid £100,000 for them. The shares would, in the ordinary routine of business, have to be delivered about a fortnight hence or later; and Sir Verrikute knew well that by that time he might buy them for £90,000, as he was running them down in conjunction with Mire & Sarmist by proceedings injurious to both companies, but justified by them on the ground of exigencies of competition, public convenience, and so on. So, at the last moment, he bought himself for delivery at £90,000 what he had sold fourteen days previously for £100,000, thus getting the advantage of the unwary purchaser, who was, of course, not "in the swim," to the tune of £10,000.

At last the ruinous effects of competition began to tell so severely upon both companies that the directors resolved to open negotiations for an amalgamation. This, again, was done in the most secret way; and while terms were being negotiated which could not but raise the price of my shares enormously whenever they should become known, Mire, Sarmist, and Sir Verrikute were buying shares, to the full extent of their available cash balances, at a low figure; and, as it afterwards turned out, again realised largely when the amalgamation was consummated and the shares rose in consequence.

It must not, however, be imagined that all the proceeds of their enterprising speculations went into their own pockets. It was necessary to "square" other directors, to "put them in for a call" of shares; in short, the weak and respectable fractions of both Boards had to be persuaded that they ought to agree to certain measures—hold their tongues, and participate in the illicit plunder, as it was "a sort of thing which every business man did."

My chairman, who was elected to that office chiefly through Sarmist's efforts, because he was a noble lord, and because he had the qualification, still more important in Sarmist's eyes, of the most charming and absolute ignorance of business, was, shortly before the completion of the amalgamation, confidentially taken into a corner by Sarmist.

"It will be necessary, my lord," Mr Sarmist said, "that our company should increase its capital and create new shares. The new shares will be given in exchange for the shares of the opposition company. This it will be easy enough to carry at a general meeting of shareholders. Our capital being two millions, and that of the other company one, we should require to make ours three millions; but I should strongly recommend that it should be made six."

"What!" exclaimed the noble lord; "six?—what for?"

“Well,” said Sarmist, complacently smiling, “it will halve the dividend—that is, our shareholders will receive £200 of share certificates for every £100 invested, and their dividends will apparently look only half as big as they are, and this will deter further competition.”

The noble lord was not quite able to follow the argument; he rather thought there was something wrong about it, but the idea of doing away with further competition, and the business authority of Sarmist, at last made him yield.

Thus my competitor was bought; my capital was first increased to a sufficient amount to represent the shares of both companies, and the joint capital doubled, or, as they called it on the Stock Exchange, “watered,” and we jogged on unitedly as one concern, and yielded half our former dividend.

My shares now became very much the instrument of gambling on the Exchange, and I am afraid that my directors gradually began to assume a less and less dignified position, as my shares passed into the hands of speculators far more knowing than the majority of them were. In vain Miro and Sarmist, who were no doubt “up to all the dodges,” attempted to keep my Board as well in hand as they had them formerly; the disastrous results of their general malfeasance and of the “watering” of my stock were only too perceptible.

The high figure at which my capital now stood made "market operations" in my shares safe, and therefore attractive, and the bold speculator began to divide the controlling power with the wire-puller.

A violent struggle now took place between a powerful combination of speculators, who bought large quantities of my shares, and Mire and Sarmist, as to who should control my destinies. The latter soon found that they would have to appropriate a very much larger amount of their own capital than they cared to lock up towards purchasing my shares, if they wished to retain their hold upon me. In order to meet this danger, and to find large sums of money belonging to other people which could be used for their own purposes, they conceived the brilliant idea of starting a trust company. The capital of this company was fixed at three millions. It was set forth in the prospectus that the trust company would exchange its own certificates against the certificates of various other companies at a given figure calculated upon the average market price of each security. The holder of one trust certificate would by this means become a part-proprietor in a large shareholding concern which owned a variety of securities, receiving their dividends and paying to its own shareholders the average on all the dividends it had taken. It was very plausibly urged that even

the smallest investor would by these means always obtain a fair return for his outlay, no matter whether some of the companies, the shares of which were owned by the trust, were paying well or not. Mire, Sarmist, and Sir Verrikute, naturally made themselves directors of the trust, completing their Board from the ranks of the necessary fashion and ignorance. The new trust was readily taken up by the public; large quantities of all the share which had been selected as eligible for the trust were exchanged for the new certificates. Mire and Sarmist, by pointing out how very low my shares stood at that moment in the market, considering my intrinsic merits, easily induced their colleagues to sell the best of the securities which had been tendered for exchange by the public, and buy with the proceeds of the sale large quantities of my own shares. Before long, half a million sterling was invested by the trust in me. This practically gave to the trust—or, in other words, to the three directors who controlled it—once more an overwhelming influence over my fortunes. This was the culmination of the power of the triumvirate. They again were in a position to bull and bear my shares with an almost absolute certainty of success; and whenever adverse circumstances or unforeseen difficulties upset their calculations and involved loss, they immediately represented themselves to have undertaken the speculation on

behalf of the trust, and "stuck" that unhappy company with the transaction. Their purse-proud arrogance and insufferable insolence at this period procured them great consideration in commercial circles, which unfortunately even extended to fashionable society in the West End. While my directors were thus triumphantly magnifying my stability and grandeur, I myself was becoming painfully conscious of the seeds of incipient disease; the water seemed to be pressing upon all my vital functions. My works were allowed to fall into disrepair, and every consideration of prudence in management was sacrificed to giving the shareholders the highest possible dividend. My reserve fund was little more than nominal, and it was very evident to me that additional capital would soon be required to renew my already decaying system and make good my numerous deficiencies. At the moment when I was regarded with envy by my enemies, with pride by my friends, and was encircled with a general halo of respect, I began to feel myself tottering on my swollen limbs, and to have a dark presentiment of the final crash.

Meantime Messrs Chisel Bros. had not been nursing their vengeance in vain. Following with a watchful eye my rising fortunes, their quick experience soon detected the internally rotten condition I have just described; and they suddenly appeared as contractors of a rival company, which

had been financed with unusual secrecy and honesty. Chisel himself was averse to the fraudulent dealings in which he had nearly become involved in my case, and determined, in order the more effectually to crush me and my contractors, Gouge & Co., to content himself with moderate profits. The consequence was, that the A. B. C. Co. started with a capital of only one million, and with works almost as extensive as mine. It was utterly unable, however, to contend against the overwhelming forces which Mire and Sarmist brought to bear against it; they invoked the aid of their influential shareholders, of the Peers and Commoners who had assisted at my banquet, and, above all, of the Press. Many baser members of the journalistic world wrote up those gentlemen and their enterprises on every possible occasion, and opened upon my rival with a chorus of slander like a pack of hounds on a hot scent. Every disgraceful transaction of which they had themselves been guilty, Messrs Mire and Sarmist darkly insinuated was practised by the Directors of the A. B. C. Co. These latter gentlemen did not happen to have been obtained by the same method as mine; but were quiet business men—not much known either to the world of fashion or of finance—their praises had not been sounded at banquets, nor had the public been made familiar with their names in articles written in their laudation. The conse-

quence was that the poor A. B. C. Co. had a very rough time of it, and was generally regarded as one of the most dishonest, gambling, stock-jobbing concerns in the city—an impression which certain of the less reputable members of my own Board found it easy to produce, by getting up "rings" to bull and bear its shares, heaping discredit upon it thereby, while they at the same time filled their own pockets. Another favourite device was that of spreading false reports about it; and when they were found to be false, they accused the A. B. C. Directors of having invented them in order to "rig" the shares. I knew the A. B. C. Co. intimately; and I used to tell it that I felt like a skunk who squirted its own vile odour all over it, and then cried aloud to the passers-by to shun it on account of its noxious effluvium. So successful were these tactics, that for a year or two the poor A. B. C. Co. scarcely got business enough to pay its working expenses. In the meantime, Mire and Sarmist could not shut their eyes to the danger which was slowly but surely threatening—not my existence alone—for which after all they cared very little—but their position as wire-pullers of a large joint-stock company, which had enabled them to accumulate so much ill-gotten wealth. They ceased, therefore, to be content with slandering the A. B. C. Co., but intrigues were secretly set on foot for the purpose of acquiring it. In this case, however,

my competitor was not so easily absorbed as on the former occasion. No congenial friend was found on the Board who was willing to go halves in the plunder. The negotiations between the Boards failed. The unprincipled attempts of broken-down speculators, who at the command of Mire and Sarmist, and with their money, bought shares in the A. B. C. Co., and appeared at that body's public meeting in the characters of distressed shareholders, and insisted upon the necessity of coming to terms with me—the powerful rival—were frustrated by the firm attitude of the A. B. C. Board; and even the threat of the still powerful Trust Company to acquire a controlling influence in the A. B. C. shares and extirpate that Company's Board, unless they came to terms, was of no avail with my rival, and practically never carried out by the Trust Company for want of funds.

A feeling of intense irritation now took possession of Mire and Sarmist; but the despondency to which, for a moment, they almost succumbed, was succeeded by a reaction to their old arrogance and self-confidence; and with a boldness which was characteristic of their palmy days, they determined to infuse new life into me by supplying me with new works. This had, indeed, become absolutely necessary; for the contrast between my efficiency and that of the A. B. C. Co. was dawning even upon the outside public.

With feverish anxiety they rushed a resolution through my Board for the raising of additional capital. With agitated anticipation my prospectus was placed before the public, inviting that never failing source of money to subscribe to my seven per cent first mortgage debenture bonds. This time, alas, the appeal was made in vain. Just as my prospectus appeared, a serious financial crisis had shaken the confidence, not only of the money circles in the city, but of the investing public at large. As a last resource, my shareholders were called together, and a piteous appeal was made to them by the noble lord who occupied the chair. My shareholders, however,—who had been in a fool's paradise up to this time, and only looked forward to receiving dividends, instead of being called upon to furnish additional capital,—indignantly demanded further explanations from the chairman, which the utter want of knowledge, on the part of that nobleman, of my affairs prevented him from affording in a satisfactory manner; and eventually a stormy meeting was brought to a close by the adoption of a resolution, moved by a powerful speaker, that a committee be elected from amongst the shareholders to inquire into the Company's position.

Now, for the first time, I became perfectly aware myself of my utter want of vitality. The weak and credulous part of my Board was even more

astonished than I was myself at the revelations which were the result of this inquiry. On the second day of these investigations large defalcations were discovered, and upon summoning the elderly and highly respectable manager to account for them, it was found that he had not yet arrived in his office. The day passed without this functionary making his appearance—indeed, it has since been ascertained that he spent the afternoon in a passage to Boulogne, and is to this day a subject of interesting but fruitless inquiry to the police. Sick at heart were the unhappy shareholders when they understood the real position of their fine property, and even Mire and Sarmist were crushed in spirit when they saw the proud Temple of Gambling, which they had reared to themselves, about to crumble to dust. It was some consolation to them doubtless to reflect upon the thousands they had made out of me, but even of this they were soon to be deprived. The Committee's report was submitted to a second meeting, recommending my immediate liquidation; and the necessary legal steps were at once taken, which landed me in that bourne from which no company returns—the Court of Chancery.

Inexorable fate, which had already overtaken me through the agency of Chisel Bros. and their friends, who had started my triumphant rival, dealt the final blow at the hand of my old friend and promoter the

Captain. With the *cœur léger* which characterised that gentleman, he had applied at the outset for a few of my shares, which he retained through my varied fortunes; and now he appeared in a court of law in the since famous suit of "*Hawk v. Mire and others*," claiming to be reimbursed the purchase money for his shares, on the ground that a certain sum was paid to Mire and Sarmist, being directors, by Gouge & Co., being contractors, under a contract which was not disclosed in the prospectus, and which contract related to the X X X or plunder money with which my readers are already familiar. This revealed the whole of the fraudulent transaction I have narrated. The high-minded judge who presided on the occasion ruled that Mire and Sarmist should repay to the shareholders the sum of £100,000; and he expressed himself in unequivocal language as to the corruption which had crept into a certain class of the commercial community of London.

My melancholy history is now closed. If I have wearied you, my patient readers, and still more patient investors, my apology must be that it would have been quite impossible for you ever to have obtained the valuable information which has been disclosed in this veracious history, excepting through the medium of an abstract being like myself. I now bid you farewell with that feeling of remorse akin to tenderness which those in their last mo-

ments are generally supposed to entertain towards persons whom they have irretrievably ruined in purse and character. I look mournfully for the last time upon the Captain as he dashes past the office in which I am now lying, behind his high-stepping bays, bent on the promotion of a new Company. Only yesterday I overheard Sarmist say to the official liquidator in greasy tones that he had been sorely chastened by Providence, but that he intended to kiss the rod and profit by the lesson he had received, by which I understood him to mean that for the future he would take proper precautions to see that X X X was so contrived that the law could not lay hold of it. Mire, I am informed by the remains of the Trust Company now lying under liquidation in the next room, took to his bed when the decision of the high-minded judge was communicated to him, at the fearful prospect of having to disgorge several millions of pounds, under the precedent just created by the said decision. He sunk gradually and never rallied. He now lies in the cemetery of a synagogue not far distant, and on his tombstone, engraved in choice Hebrew, is a correct translation of the thirty-eighth clause of the Companies Act (1867), 30 & 31 Vict. cap. 131.

N.B.—The 38th clause runs as follows: “Every

prospectus of a Company, and every notice inviting persons to subscribe for shares in any Joint-Stock Company, shall specify the dates and the names of the parties to any contract entered into by the Company, or the promoters, directors, or trustees thereof, before the issue of such prospectus or notice, whether subject to adoption by the Directors, or the Company, or otherwise : and any prospectus or notice not specifying the same shall be deemed fraudulent on the part of the promoters, directors, and officers of the Company knowingly issuing the same, as regards any person taking shares in the Company on the faith of such prospectus, unless he shall have had notice of such contract."

BEE OR BEATRIX.

BY L. B. WALFORD.

[MAGA. JANUARY 1876.]

“**H**OLLOA! Betty *is* gorgeous! Isn't she?
Rather!”

Rude boy!

Will the day ever dawn when brothers will be heard to speak as befits their humble station? Will sisters ever succeed in extracting from those chubby lips anything approaching to respectful language? Will Beatrix ever prevail with Tom?

We should say not.

To begin with, Bee is half-hearted about it. When there is no one else present, no spectator to see, no auditor to hear, she is ready to be Bet, Betty, Bee, anything and everything the boys choose to call her. She assists in their projects, overlooks their shortcomings, stands in the breach when the schoolroom revolts from the drawing-room, and is a useful, humble, and efficient companion.

But down-stairs the scene changes.

Beatrix expects to be Beatrix.

She would, when there, fain exact from Jack, Tom, and Charlie a degree of subservience, and likewise an amount of reticence, which the poor lads do not understand, and are not disposed to submit to. She thinks it mean of Charlie to tell aloud that she has been galloping bareback on the pony, all the afternoon, and frowns him down accordingly ; whereas poor Charlie regards it as a feat worthy of mention, and wonders what his sister would be at !

Or Jack is the delinquent. He complains (in no undertones certainly) that Betty has forgotten to send his macintosh to be dried, after wearing it out in the rain. He did not mind her taking the macintosh, but she ought to have sent it to the kitchen when she came in.

Jack has a generous nature, and his complaint is just. It is therefore perfectly incomprehensible to him that Bee should crimson up to the eyes, as she gracefully lounges over her embroidery by Lady Adela's side, and that she should seize the moment when they meet alone in the gallery afterwards, to reproach him for his rudeness and stupidity.

Had he grudged her the use of his coat ? Had he not gone without, himself, and got drenched, and never said a word about it ? It is too bad to find fault with him for only wishing to have it dried ; she knew they were going out in the boat after

dinner, and that was why he cared ; and if she did the same thing again he would just hide the macintosh, and that was all about it.

Beatrix cannot make them comprehend.

She has only been emancipated from schoolroom bondage a few months ago, and it seems to her that she has overleapt a great barrier.

In her inmost soul she loves her old ways as dearly as ever ; but she regards them in something the same light as a smuggler turned coast-guardsmen may be supposed to view his former occupations.

They go against his conscience, but they are dear to his heart.

To tie flies, manufacture nets, and cower over bubbling pots of toffy in the back regions, is still delightful to our little Bee ; and she has no intention of foregoing her haunts, though the coast-guardsmen must perforce abjure his. Such doings need not be adverted to in polite circles. No one would ever suspect this graceful young model of fashion, if it were not for these boys, these dreadfully candid, superfluously communicative associates of hers.

Has she no means of keeping them quiet ?

Many a time Miss Graeme sits on thorns in her pink embroidered muslin and pearls, hearing what she dares not confute, and is powerless to turn aside.

Afterwards, comes an encounter, of course, even while her outraged feelings warn her that it is unavailing.

What *can* she mean? What *have* they done? What a goose she is to think of such rubbish!

And this happens so often that the boys are growing weary of it, and Beatrix too.

They are beginning to experience contempt for their sister, and she disgust at them.

How will it end?

"Betty is gorgeous! Isn't she? Rather!"

It is Tom who says it, Tom who opens his round eyes and his wide mouth, and emits the impassioned sentiment.

They had been having a most delightful afternoon in their great, comfortable, untidy den at the back of the house; and Beatrix, bedaubed with paste, and adhered to by many a curly shaving, the very heart and soul of the proceedings, had betaken herself off at the sound of the dressing-bell more than half an hour before her brothers.

Five minutes sufficed for their toilet.

With shining, soapy faces, and unfastened sleeve-links, they had torn down in the wildest haste at the sharp summons of the second gong; but Bee had not appeared.

Dinner is announced, off they all file in procession, and as they pass, behold! the staircase is illuminated by a radiant vision, a picture.

Beatrix, all in white, with silver stars that shiver and quiver in the lamp-light ; great fuchsia bells hanging over her fair neck ; locket, bracelets, sparkling buckles peeping out on little white satin slippers,—Beatrix takes them all by storm, and Tom confesses it.

Old Sir Charles gives a grunt, and passes forward. He had almost forgotten who was coming that evening, but for nobody will he alter his own peculiar costume, his ancient, quaintly-cut swallow-tail, black watered silk waistcoat, and light morning trousers, so out of all keeping with the rest of his attire that they nearly break Lady Graeme's heart every time that the incongruity strikes her afresh.

For no one will he change, either, the huge black satin stock wound twice round his high, stiff, slightly frayed-out shirt-collar.

She says he looks a perfect guy ; but he does not—he looks a very dear, kind, clean, funnily-dressed old gentleman.

But Lady Graeme disapproves still more of her daughter's appearance.

Rich and sober is her own attire, and the two extremes are unsuitable in her eyes.

“Bee, my dear !”

“Yes, mamma ?”

“This is too much, dear child. A family party, your brother and one other gentleman ; indeed, you look over-dressed, my love.”

"You forget Miss Williams, mamma; we are not quite alone. And Arthur is so particular, I thought you would be sorry if he complained."

"White satin slippers!" murmurs Lady Graeme, in a low reproachful aside.

"Arthur always looks at my shoes the first thing. You know, mamma, he used to speak to you about them."

"There is a medium between shabbiness and smartness, Bee. Your untidiness at one time used to annoy me very much, but I had rather see even that than this excess of attention to dress. Those slippers are only fit for a ball; at least, for myself, I never wear white ones at a dinner-party. Of course under white dresses it is different——"

"That was exactly what I thought, mamma. Even my bronze ones did not look nice under this dress."

"But why wear the dress at all, my dear? You have plenty of others, and your brother will think we have a house full of people. The best thing you can do is to change it after dinner."

Bee thinks otherwise.

She was prepared for something of this sort, and perhaps could have been down a little sooner, had she not thought it expedient to slip into the dining-room behind the others. They caught her a moment too soon.

She had quite made up her mind to wear the silver grenadine this evening.

Not without a qualm, it is true, a tremulous shaking of the resolution ere it settled down ; but once fixed, such previous vibrations only serve to render the resolve more steady.

Our pretty Beatrix is, you see, a very young lady. Trifles, questions which will appear to her of minute importance by-and-by, now loom before her fancy, mighty as giants.

Of the world she has seen next to nothing.

A presentation, a few weeks uncertain and limited gaieties, for which Lady Graeme took her to a London hotel, and which neither of them enjoyed in the least ; this, with a round of visits at country-houses in August and September, including the northern meeting, are all that Bee could point to, if she came to confession about that "season," and those "house parties," to which she so glibly alludes in conversation.

She makes the most of it, poor child !

She skims over the surface of her small experience so lightly, and prates in the half-acquired jargon of Belgravia so cleverly, that good Lady Graeme does not half like it, and wonders whether, after all, she was right in undertaking that expedition, which cost her such infinite trouble with Sir Charles, and for which the poor baronet had to pay so heavily.

She had felt it at the time to be her duty.

Even now she does not see what else she *could* have done. The children must have their day. All the other girlyies of her acquaintance are either going through the same or have been so, and why not her Beatrix?

Here is Bee shut up for the winter in an old Scotch country-house, where she will see nobody, and be seen by nobody, until perhaps the New Club Ball may stir up Sir Charles to think he would enjoy meeting his old cronies once more; and they may spend a week or so in the rush of engagements which cluster round that important event in Auld Reekie, and that is all.

Is it fair to her young daughter on the threshold of life?

For herself, the gentle dame is quite content; her winter months are never dull, but she looks at Beatrix.

Yes; she is sure, quite sure, that she could have done nothing else; and still——

Why should Bee be so different when she stays out to what she is at home?

Why should all these little airs and graces be packed up in her travelling trunk to go with her, as regularly as are her dresses? and why should there be such a stock of them both?

A morning and evening garment for every day of the visit, no matter to whom, or for how long;

such a fuss about her flowers and her ribbons, her hats to match, her gloves to contrast ; and such attentions exacted from the maid, who rarely fastens a button for her at other times !

And when in the drawing-room, there is creeping over her a something—it is too vague to define, but it is not real, it is not inborn—an engrafted taint of artificiality, that just takes the edge off little Bee's attractiveness.

Even with the Malcolms, whom she has known so long, and the Cathcarts, who are the plainest and quietest of country folks, even before them, the small display goes on ; and her mother hears the soft voice take a peculiar note, and marks certain turns of phrases, inflations of facts, suppressions, newly-acquired accentuations—in truth, a host of petty distortions, which seem even too trivial to think of, but which nevertheless cause her to twist her conscience inside-out to see if she can be to blame in any way for it all.

Of course, whenever there is company at their own old castle, it is the same ; but for the last month visitors there have been rare.

With the exception of poor Miss Williams's annual visitation, indeed, they have been quite alone.

Betty has superseded Beatrix altogether on the boys' lips ; and Betty has been as merry and pleasant and delightful a little household spirit as mother's heart could wish to see.

She walks and rides with her father, practises diligently every forenoon, and sings to them her sweet simple songs in the evenings ; produces rough sketches of the November sunsets, wonders of art in the family estimation ; and, above all, is great in the boating, the sea-fishing, the oyster-gathering, during those famous low tides which only come in the late autumn.

Macky, the old nurse, remonstrates against the last-named amusement — remonstrates, at least, against Miss Bee's being called before seven o'clock, and wandering so far and wide in her quest.

The oysters ! Oh ay, she is glad to get the oysters, but they might be had nearer hand ; her mamma little thinks how far she goes ; the water will be upon her some day ; the mornings are getting too cold, she will catch (expressive phrase !) her death.

Betty turns a deaf ear, and the old woman's maunderings go for nothing.

Now they are preparing for the Christmas party, and already there is a change.

"Why in the world could Arthur not have waited till next week, when those other people are coming, instead of rushing down upon us in this way, and bringing that Captain Blurt, Bluff, Blount, or whatever his name is, with him ?"

Sir Charles does not like being put out of his way, and telegraphic messages are not at all in his

line; but the soar which chafes him most is, that Arthur demands what he is uncertain of being able to comply with, and yet would ill like to refuse—a roe-drive for himself and his friend the very day after their arrival.

“Coming on Monday night with Blount. Not till late. Have a hunt for Tuesday.”

So ran the telegram, and certainly it was a cool one.

They knew who Captain Blount was, had heard of him as one of Arthur’s brother officers, but not a word of his coming to Castle Graeme had been mooted till that morning.

One thing was good—they were not to arrive till late; and Lady Graeme breathed a sigh of relief as she read the words. Her house-keeping difficulties are great at this time of year, and potato-soup and Loch Fyne herrings would not commend themselves to the young Guardsman as first courses, when his friend is there.

When alone, Arthur can make very short work of the soup, and will come back for herrings a second and a third time; but that is quite another thing.

Every one knows, down to the lowest scullery-maid, that when the Captain, as he has been fondly styled since the day he held his commission, brings home a guest, they must look to their steel.

Nothing escapes his eye. Little omissions and economies which are winked at by the kind old

laird and his gentle dame, had better not be tried before the rampant young autocrat, who is the real master of the house while he is in it; and Duncan shakes his head with twinkling humorous eyes, as he unfastens the second silver chest, and Macky bustles up again and again to her linen press and her store-room, thinking with fond, proud hearts, how they will catch it if everything is not quite to my lord's mind.

As for Bee, the telegram put her quite in a flutter. There were flowers to be got, few as there are in the greenhouse at present; rooms to be arranged; above all, oysters to be brought in from her own reserve bed on the shore.

Who that had seen Betty Graeme when the tide was out that morning, tucking up her short skirts, putting aside the slippery tangle, and kneeling on the rocks, while with grave and anxious care she selected her oysters; who that had watched her afterwards bearing them, breathless and dripping, homeward — displaying her freight with honest pride at the window where her father sat—doing it all for herself because the boys were out, and doing it as well or better than any of them could,—would have dreamt that this dainty apparition at the evening dinner-table could be one and the same creature?

No harm, either, in the transformation, if only Beatrix will still be Betty at heart.

"If only," thinks Lady Graeme, "Arthur will not begin putting his foolish notions into her head, and if only Captain Blount will let her alone!" Captain Blount does let her alone, unexpectedly, unaccountably in the mother's eyes.

He has come down to shoot roes and wild-duck, and does not in the least heed Arthur's fears that he will find the old place dull, nor his insinuations that his sister would have had some girls down to meet them if she had known.

Arthur means to be questioned about the sister.

He would have described her as just out, and awfully run after, which he would have declared was the greatest nuisance, as he was expected to tool her about everywhere—with whatever else he supposes likely to enhance her consequence.

But his friend does not give him the chance.

He has never met Miss Graeme, and does not in the least care whether she has girls to meet them or not; nor indeed, to tell the truth, is he so passionately attached to Arthur as to be very deeply interested in his people at all: but he does like wild-duck shooting, and he fancies very much the idea of a roe-drive.

Sir Charles, however, he is taken with, in spite of himself; in spite of the black watered silk waistcoat and morning trousers too. Harry is a sportsman, and he can reverence a veteran in the craft.

All alive and interested now, although he had slept peacefully in his big arm-chair till the very moment of their arrival, the laird finds a ready listener in his son's friend.

That message from the keeper, which came in an hour ago, has restored his equanimity; the hunt has been satisfactorily arranged, and his cares are at rest.

A ceaseless hum proceeds from the big chair. Beatrix wonders what they *can* find to say more, when over and over the same well-known names—Henry, Purdie, Westley Richards—recur in the conversation.

"I could tell you a curious thing, Captain Blount"— A quarter of an hour passes.

"I remember something like that, Sir Charles." Another quarter of an hour.

Ten o'clock, the servants come in to prayers, and the evening is over.

Beatrix sweeps past the stranger with a stately little bend; he starts up and shakes hands, looks round to see how many more are coming, politely stands while every one is scuffling about, and, as they leave the room, sinks into his chair again, with "My uncle had a deer-forest——" and Bee laughs outright behind the door.

What a man!

On Arthur, however, his sister's careful toilet has not been thrown away.

He quite approves—he was proud to present her—she has made him capital tea; and he and his friend have had a warm reception.

All is as it should be; and accordingly our young man's brow is smooth: he patronises his mother and pets his sister, good-humouredly regards the boys, who hang on his lips, and gaze into his face; and Lady Graeme's heart lightens—she really feels the joy of having her first-born by her side; her husband's animation exhilarates her spirits, and Captain Blount is viewed through rose-coloured spectacles.

Sheep's-head for breakfast!

Arthur makes the best of it; supposes, aloud, that it is there out of compliment to his tastes; and puts nearly the half on his own plate.

As he passes to his chair from the side-table, he says to Blount, "You never saw *this* before!" and jocosely holds out the plate.

Honest Blount answers simply, "Thank you," and stretches forth his hand to take it.

Arthur stops short. "It is sheep's-head, Harry. You don't know what sheep's-head is."

"I am very fond of it—thanks."

Taken aback, Arthur goes to the sideboard for more, and finds that Jack, Tom, and Charlie have swept off the remainder among them.

This is too bad.

He loves sheep's-head, and is ashamed of it; and

here he has to put up with the shame without the sheep's-head !

"Mamma, why don't we have breakfasts like everybody else ? There is nothing but fish here—no omelets, nor curry, nor anything !" cries the young man, magnificently.

Lady Graeme looks down her plentiful board.

Eggs, scones, rolls, hot cakes, jams, marmalade, toast, bread-and-butter, in abundance—on the side-board cold meats, fish, and game ; what would the boy have ?

She knows better than to argue with him, however : Arthur in this spirit is best let alone—the loss of his sheep's-head has ruffled his equanimity, and the pleasant mood of the previous evening is gone.

"Miserable tea !" he mutters.

To this also she turns a deaf ear.

"Bee, why don't *you* look after things ? I hate to bring any one here when everything is at sixes and sevens. Look at that spoon ! Duncan doesn't keep the silver fit to be seen ! You let everything go down when I am not here : every one does just as they please ; and papa and mamma never say a word."

"Do be quiet, Arthur ; Captain Blount will hear you."

"I told you I was going to bring him, and——How was there no hot water in the bath-room this morning ?" he breaks off abruptly.

"I don't know. How should I?" retorts his sister, with dignity.

"That's it. You don't know. Nobody ever does know about anything in this house. I suppose Macky won't know, either. Blount will think us the queerest lot. That he could not even get a hot bath!"

"Oh, I suppose it was that pipe; I heard Macky talking about it, Arthur. The man has not come yet, and she was so put out; she said you would scold her. Don't say anything—it will be put right this week."

"Which means next week, or next month. As if she could not have got it done before now! It is always the way. Why was the man not had over yesterday?"

"I really do not know. How can you be so disagreeable?" cries poor Bee, her patience on the wane. "Speak about it yourself. How can I know about pipes and things?"

"Mamma ought to look after it," the rumbling undertone goes on. "Mamma never makes Macky do anything now. Do, for any sake, let us have a decent luncheon; hot-pot, and proper things. Blount is accustomed to having everything in the best style."

She dutifully acquiesces, and hopes he has now run himself out.

But no.

She is by no means so smart as on the evening before, and in this he finds a fresh grievance.

"That gown of yours is too light for this time of year. Velveteen is the thing. Why don't you have velveteen?"

"I have not got my winter things yet."

"And when do you mean to get them, pray?"

"Oh, by-and-by I shall send for some. It is so difficult down here, and after Christmas we shall have nobody."

"And you mean to wear that all the winter?"

"No, of course—I told you I thought it would do for just now; the weather is still so fine—you know it never is very cold here; and mamma thinks we shall go in to Edinburgh in February. I was waiting till then."

"Do go to a decent dressmaker, then. That woman of mamma's can't make anything fit to be seen. You should have seen those girls at the Duke's; they had on the jolliest gowns every day."

"They were able to afford them, I daresay."

"Oh, that's all nonsense! A good gown is just as cheap to make up as a bad one——"

"But a good dressmaker is not as cheap to go to as having them made up at home."

"They never turn you out the same."

"I know they don't." She is too generous to tell him how she smarts under this knowledge—nay, more, how she had almost written that order

to Madame Vallotin last week, which would have turned her out as trim and smart now as he could have wished, when her father's complaints of his extravagance made her stop.

Accordingly Arthur feels he has the best of it, and proceeds to deliver a homily to the purpose that economy consists in having the best of everything—things that last, you know, and always look well, and you are never ashamed of them, even if they get a little bit old-fashioned.

All very well, but when the young man of the family is of this opinion, it happens not unfrequently that he puts it out of the power of the other members to act in accordance with it.

Beatrix would not hint this to Arthur for the world, but in her heart she rebels; she cannot but feel it hard to bear.

As for him, he is already in a better humour.

"You should have seen those girls at the Duke's," he repeats. "Some of them were awfully nice."

"Oh, tell me about your visit there; you never wrote a word to us, and I wanted so much to hear. Now begin; who were there?" cries Bee, brightening up.

So he begins—she is all attention; he is mollified, soothed: she questions, he rejoins with complacency, and by the time that breakfast is over, the sky is quite serene.

But one pair of loving eyes have cast more than one anxious glance towards her full-fledged nestlings, and a simple wile has been devised whereby Arthur and Bee may not be too often undisturbed in each other's company.

"My poor boy, he means no harm; but they are both so young, and she is so easily led. I had far rather see her romping with Jack and Charlie, as she did a year ago, than drinking in Arthur's foolish notions, and trying to be like the giddy girls he tells her about."

Bee has already begun to resume something of the Beatrix manner.

Arthur has been relating to her his adventures with one young lady in a dogcart, and showing the purse another has worked for him, while he declares he must not forget the gloves he owes to a third; each of the three is declared to be "awfully jolly and *friendly*," and she is given to understand that this is quite the approved thing.

So, by way of being *friendly*, she is writing at the davenport when the young men come in, and looks up with a little simper, wondering why they are not yet gone? What can they mean by dawdling about in that way the whole morning; the day is half over!

This to Arthur—at Blount.

Harry replies in good faith. "The beaters are only assembling now, Miss Graeme; we are not

to start for a quarter of an hour. Are you coming to see us off?"

Miss Graeme laughs at the idea, but her more sophisticated brother approves; that sort of thing was in vogue at the Duke's, you see.

"Come along, Bee; you can come to the top wood, at all events, and Jack will bring you home."

Jack.—"Catch me!"

"Well, she can stay with me, then, and I'll look after her—can't she, mamma?" says the young sovereign, graciously. Unless in a very bad temper, Arthur always extends his benign protection to his sister; by so doing he preserves his hold over her.

But will she be with him all the time? Is it not too far to walk? Bee is sure she is able for it? Thick boots? Galoshes?

Satisfied on these points, Lady Graeme has no objection; Arthur will be taken up with the sport, and she sees in Betty's dancing eyes her great desire.

A roe-hunt is nothing new to her, it is true, but she is too much an out-of-doors creature not to delight in the walk, and the sport, and the fun and excitement generally. There is, however, one drawback.

If only Captain Blount had not been going. His being there is a check upon them all. However, she will keep out of his way; and he cannot think

her accompanying them very odd, or Arthur would not have proposed it; of course, Arthur knows about such things. Besides odd, or not (Betty, not Beatrix, speaking), she does not care what he thinks!

Gladly she leaves her notes unwritten, tumbles them into the drawer, and in her glee at escaping runs headlong against Harry, who is standing outside the door, staring, with one eye shut, down the muzzle of his gun.

Bee, in running against the gun, knocks it from the eye, and it scrapes his cheek.

"I beg your pardon; I am so sorry!" cries she, joyously, and flies up-stairs. Harry Blount looks after her, for just half a minute, then he rubs his cheek, and stares down the gun-muzzle again.

Outside the beaters are gathering fast.

Duncan's wizened visage peers out of the hall-door, and hails M'Killop, the long-bodied policeman, who proposes to keep the boys in order, and has tried it in vain, at every hunt in the Castle Graeme drives for the last ten or fifteen years.

The boys will not be kept in order; but M'Killop enjoys the sport as much as any one of them, and the dinner after it too.

"M'Killop, will ye tak' onything?"

"Thank ye, Duncan; no' the noo. Are they ready yet?"

"They'll be ready soon enough. Sir Charles is gane ben, and he's aye to his time."

"Is that fat George o' yours to gang wi' us, Duncan?"

"He'll no' gang far, ye needna fear."

"Has he been on the hill, ever?"

"No' he."

"We'll gie him a taste o't, then. What stryngers hae ye in the hoose the day?"

"An Englisher wi' the Captain, that's a'."

"Nane o' the Striven set?" in a disappointed tone.

"Nane but oorsels the day."

M'Killop administers chastisement to an explosive boy, and touches his cap to my lady at the window.

More waiting, and at length a voice from behind, and young Mr Graeme appears. "How are you, M'Killop? Are these all you have got for us to-day?" says he, grandly.

"Deed, an' I thocht we had done pretty weel, Captain. There's five-and-thairty here, and yonder's a wheen mair on the road."

"Aw, yes. Not so bad, after all. We have usually a great many more," observes Arthur to his friend, who has followed him to the door-step; "but these will do the work, and that is all we want."

"A' we want, indeed!" mutters the policeman, indignantly; "an' me getting them thegither the haill o' yesterday! Sir Charles kens better."

Sir Charles comes out beaming all over.

"Hey, M'Killop! You have a fine set of lads here to-day. A splendid array, eh, Arthur? You see we can get up a hunt as well as ever, though you did give us such short notice. It was too bad of the Captain, was it not, M'Killop?"

M'Killop grins, pacified and self-conscious; while Arthur talks to Blount as loudly as he can; and Beatrix, feeling a little ashamed of her brother, tries also, as well as she can, to cover his confusion.

Then follows a rush from behind, Jack, Tom, and Charlie, exuberant, ecstatic, perfectly uncontrollable in their rejoicings.

"I say, papa, look at George. George is going! He! he! he!"

No one can help looking at George, of course. Duncan openly sniggers; M'Killop turns aside; and Blount, Arthur, and Beatrix on the door-step glance at each other. Six-foot high George, the most solemn of footmen, is there, his fat white face surmounted by a fancy cap; his borrowed attire, if not unfit, at least unfitting, from top to toe; his hand grasping as grievous a crab-tree cudgel as ever did that of Giant Despair.

"*George! you can't walk!*" Sir Charles blurts out.

"I can try, Sir Charles." George respectful, and in no wise disconcerted.

"Why, man——" begins his master, and bursts out a-laughing.

Then the whole of the boys set up a roar. They feel they may, since the laird made the joke, or at least was the first to enjoy it. But George, poor soul! reddens, half inclined to cry.

"Never mind, then; come along!" cries the old gentleman, recovering; "and if you do walk, those legs of yours belie you. Now then, M'Killop. At the old place. Lead off!"

"Off they march, scramble, run, and scuffle.

The gravel and the velvet turf in front is sadly cut up and trampled upon, but the laird's eye is bright and joyous. Lady Graeme, with Miss Williams—the poor, dull, uninteresting Miss Williams—with whom fate obliges her to pass this day in company, is standing at the window, and they salute her gaily as they pass.

What a morning it is!

Brightly sparkles the frost upon the fir-trees, as it drips beneath the influence of the noonday sun. The sea is at its lowest, calm as glass, blue as the heavens above it, here and there twinkling in diamond points of light, anon covered from shore to shore with those long streaks that tell where the herring lie beneath.

All along the wet sands the gulls, curlews, and herons are feeding. A flock of ducks is sailing in and out among the rocks and headlands of the bay.

One solitary bird, large and white, hovers over-

head in the blue picture-frame. Patiently it waits awhile, circles round, regains the former point, then flashes from its height, with a sharp report strikes the water—and the solan goose has seized its prey.

"Look, Captain Blount; you won't see a sight like that south of the Tweed! That fellow is come all the way from Ailsa to fish these waters. See, see, up he goes!" cries the old sportsman, standing stock-still. "Up, up, up! now he has found his place again, and a bonnie fish in his maw, I'll warrant him! Did you hear the noise he made? Did you hear that clap?"

"Was that report from the bird?" cries Blount. "I thought it was a shot from the opposite shore."

"Ay, it was the bird. They seldom come as far as this till about this season of the year. Then you may see one by himself pretty frequently, sometimes two, not often more at a time."

They are walking on again, up through the narrow wood-paths, Sir Charles pointing hither and thither as he pours out tales of exploits past; and faster and faster he and Blount hurry along, till Bee and her brothers are left far behind.

When they reach the trysting-place every one is waiting. Confusion, talking, loitering ensues, but at last the main body start; a few efficient hands being told off to the passes. Arthur and his sister depart for their station, and Captain Blount is marched off to his, under escort. Arthur's pass

is not far from the cottage, and is soon reached. He smokes, she walks up and down, and an hour goes by.

Occasionally wild whoops break out at different points, and the prolonged cry of the beaters is heard, now far in the distance, now startlingly close at hand, but nothing presents itself.

Bee feels it slightly monotonous, but does not like to say so, and another hour is gone.

"Two o'clock," says Arthur. "What in all the world——"

Bang! a single report.

"That was Blount! That shot did execution! They will be here next!" cries Arthur, all excitement. "Keep quiet, Bee, and don't you stir. Come in behind this tree. Ah, that little wretch, Charlie! what is he setting up his pipe for? Be quiet, you impertinent little ape!" snarls his brother, between his teeth.

Charlie continues to yell, yell, yell; Arthur is getting furious; suddenly comes a soft rustling, a gentle pit-pat on the mossy path: he puts out his hand and touches Beatrix. She has seen it already, the timid creature, all confused, trembling, and suspicious, creeping along the quiet opening which may prove a shelter from agony and death.

Ha! what is that? Something unusual, something dangerous? A piece of red among the green, a sparkle among the brackens.

Dare she venture on? One slender limb is extended, the graceful head is thrown upwards, the scared eyeballs search the prospect.

The ambuscade cowers motionless, Arthur's finger on the trigger; there comes a shout from above, and the doe bounds forward to her fate.

That shot needed not much of the sportsman's skill. Within ten yards of Beatrix she lies mortally wounded, the poor palpitating sides heave more and more faintly, the mouth opens and shuts in spasms of agony.

Bee cannot look, nor speak, nor move.

"I'll soon settle you, my friend!" cries the happy hunter, taking out his knife.

"Oh, Arthur, don't!"

"What? you needn't look. It's all right. Put the poor animal out of its pain."

"Oh, do let it alone! let it die in peace."

A sceptical laugh as he steps forward; she puts her hands before her eyes, and rushes into the wood.

"Where is your sister?"

It is Blount who has come up, joyously excited. "Mine is a buck, and the sweetest little head you ever saw! If Sir Charles will give it me, I mean to have it stuffed."

"A buck, is it? I heard you. I thought you were going to have all the luck. When it wasn't a right and left, I thought they must have moved off, and that it was that little fool Charlie who had

done it! But the crittur knew better," says he, in high good-humour.

"But where is your sister?"

"She has made off, I do believe. She would not stay to see the *coup de grâce*. Well, if the governor does his part, we shall have done a pretty good morning's work. Were the beaters near you?"

"Only once—that fat footman of yours holding out nobly: and oh! you should hear him call; the slow pomposity with which he gives it forth, and his strut, strut, strut along—but no notion of giving in. He can't be a bad fellow."

"George? Oh, by no means, but I should have thought too much of a swell for this work. Now for luncheon—it is at the keeper's; and we have earned it, Harry, and no mistake."

"But where is your sister?"

"Oh, she will turn up; she's all right." (Bother these girls! what a nuisance they are!) "Come along."

"She can't go walking about the woods, you know, with all these guns about, and in that brown dress, too. We must find her."

"You look, then. I must go on and see that all is ready. Just wait a minute here, and she is sure to make her appearance."

"Can I miss the way?"

"Oh dear no. Besides, she knows it; but you had better come with me. Stop, I'll call. Bee! holloa!"

"I am here," comes a low voice from the fern, not very far off.

"And what did you give us such a fright for, then? Here were we just going off to hunt for you; at least Harry was. Come out here, you goose! we are going in to luncheon."

"Is—is the creature dead, Arthur?"

"Dead? Ages ago. Come out, I say."

She has been crouching on the wet ground behind a mossy rock, and comes forward with slow steps and a curiously white face.

"Well," exclaims her brother, "I did not think you had been such a silly! You have been at a hunt often enough before."

"I never saw one killed, and I never will come out again!" cried poor Beatrix.

Harry Blount is looking at her, and suddenly he seizes her arm, and exclaims, "Take care, Miss Graeme!" But he is too late; the colour has all left Bee's face, and she has sunk down sick and faint on the pathway.

What is to be done?

Arthur whistles in his consternation, Blount lifts her in his arms, and the two regard each other with a gaze of mute and helpless appeal.

Arthur has brandy, but no water—it is whisky, by the way, as he is obliged to confess; but do they dare to give her this? What if she were to choke! Neither of them knows what might happen,

and Arthur looks at the bottle, and shakes it, and thinks he would like a mouthful himself, but puts it back in his pocket again.

"I'll tell you what, Harry. I'll run for the keeper's wife. You hold her there, and I shan't be gone a minute!"

Off he scampers, thankful to be free; while poor Blount, awkward and wretched, is left with his helpless burden.

"She is very pretty," he thinks. "Poor girl! What a shame it was to bring her, and how happy and jolly she was about coming! It was the sight of the blood, I know, just when she was tired and famishing. Now, who is to take her home? Not I. I must have one try in the next pass. Oh, she is coming round, is she?"

Yes; she opens her eyes, draws a breath, and puts her hand to her forehead, from which Harry has removed the hat.

Suddenly he twirls her round with velocity, putting himself between her eyes and the sad sight that had unnerved her before, and with the motion the maiden begins to feel something strange in her position. Her senses return, and she rises to her feet, gazing dizzily round with but half-recovered perception.

How thankful Blount is to hear footsteps coming! for Arthur has met Sir Charles, and the boys and keepers, all on their way to the cottage.

The doe is speedily removed; and Beatrix, whom her brothers regard with awe, is comforted and exhorted by her father.

"A sportsman's daughter, and can't stand a shot, Bee! Who would have believed it of you? What will mamma say? We must get you home somehow, as soon as we have had something to eat. One of the boys must go back with you."

But when the time comes, Bee declares that she will go alone.

In the dead silence and downcast eyes with which her father's proposition was received, she read the blow he was inflicting.

She is quite able to walk, she knows the way, and she will be as safe in keeping to the track as if in their own grounds.

"I really think she may. What do you say, Arthur? Everybody is out on the hill with us, and we are all up above. That is to say, if you are sure you won't be frightened or anything, Betty; and mind you keep to the track. Don't let mamma put the blame on me if any harm comes to you. It is your own fault if anything happens."

"Let me see Miss Graeme home."

Every one stares at Harry, Miss Graeme herself included. Every one laughs at the idea. It is *his* hunt. He is the stranger, the guest, the whole thing has been got up for him, and in his heart

Harry knows himself that he ought not to be the one.

But what is to be done?

Arthur will not offer, and the boys each think the other should go. Kind Sir Charles looks weakly at his offspring, sympathising, and sorely perplexed. She cannot walk with a keeper, and altogether the poor child is made to feel that she is terribly in the way.

Harry cannot stand it.

"After all, sir, I have really had enough. I shall be better up to it another day; but standing so long is apt to give one the cramp. Let me be the escort."

Of course, if he puts it upon that, there is nothing more to be said.

Arthur tries to look as if he thought it quite the right thing, and the boys breathe a sigh of relief as the two brown figures disappear down the track.

"I am so sorry to take you home, Captain Blount. I am so ashamed. One of the boys might——" and poor Beatrix tries to gulp down her mortification, but cannot finish the sentence.

It is evident that she has not been taken in by his flimsy attempt at fiction, that she knows as well as he does himself why he is to be better up to it another day. Her gratitude is overbalanced by her vexation, and she would give much to be able to pack him off to his post again.

Of course he laughs it off, pleased nevertheless, regards her kindly, and begins to talk of other things.

Bee is most anxious to be companionable ; she will do all she can to compensate him for the loss of his afternoon's sport ; she points out the beauties of the walk, has tales to tell of childish exploits, curiosities to point out ; and to all he says in reply, she listens with the most flattering and submissive attention.

The walk will soon be over, but there is one more stone dyke in the way.

"It is rather a worse one than usual," says Blount, shaking the stones, that totter when he touches them ; "they are lying loose along the top, without an attempt at being fixed. We must try to find a better place lower down."

"It will be just as bad there—rather worse, in fact ; it only goes down to the burn. I think," says Bee, modestly, "you have not fired off your second barrel, Captain Blount ; would you put the gun over first?"

He laughs. "That is the advantage of a breech-loader. Look here, Miss Graeme ; satisfy yourself that both muzzles are empty. See, we turn it down so, take out the cartridge, and combine safety with economy. The cartridge will do again."

She murmurs something about having always heard her father fire off his gun as he approached the house, and feels that she has been officious ; but he reassures her.

"Sir Charles sticks to the old muzzle-loader. You were quite right, indeed. Half the gun-accidents take place through scrambling over a fence with a loaded gun. The twigs catch, or something."

He is helping her over, and a shower of stones topples after them.

"You seem to have a superfluity of these walls about here?"

"Charlie and I had to get over seventeen the other day."

"Seventeen! Where had you been?"

"He was fishing all along there, and I went with him, as I wanted to visit a blind man who lives at the back of that hill. It is too far to go by the road, at least to walk, and we had a delightful expedition."

"Don't you fish?"

"Oh yes, but not these pools; I can't get at them. I fish a burn nearer home."

Blount draws her on, and the unsuspecting creature lays bare before him all the tenor of her simple life. They go laughing and chatting along, and by the time they reach the hall-door they have become quite friends.

Lady Graeme, just come in from her drive, wonders much to hear Bee's voice underneath the windows, and Bee's merry laugh as the door opens.

What can have brought them all home at this time of day?

No accident, of course, or Bee would not be laughing; but it is odd.

Still more does she wonder when Harry Blount alone follows Beatrix into the room. Explanations ensue.

Bee had had enough of the hunt, was tired, and papa thought she had better come home. She need not alarm her mother by saying anything about the faintness at present.

"Could none of your brothers have brought you?"—very gravely asked.

Of course they could. Of course Arthur was selfish, and the boys thoughtless, but she would fain screen them if she can. Captain Blount is sailing very near the wind in his efforts to come to the rescue, but it is a bad business; and at last Bee breaks out, unable to control herself any longer, for she sees that both Harry and she are under suspicion.

"Mamma, the truth was, that none of them would come; but Captain Blount was so good-natured—— I am sure I could have come alone," cries the poor culprit, with almost a sob. "I could not *bear* to bring him."

The maternal brow clears.

"Now I understand, my dear. It was very unfortunate, and we are both very much obliged to Captain Blount. It would have been most improper, quite dangerous for you to have attempted

walking home alone ; the wild cattle, horses, even the dogs, are sometimes vicious. I can't think how your father could have proposed such a thing."

"It was I who proposed it ; papa did not know what to do."

Lady Graeme will take care it does not happen again ; and, aloud, wonders at Sir Charles, but in her heart knows of old how little there is to wonder at.

The one she really is wroth with is Arthur. To send his sister home with a stranger ! To let a guest do what should have been his part ! To force his friend to give up his amusement instead of giving it up himself !

"I feel ashamed of my sons," says the good lady ; "and I hope they will at least have the grace to be ashamed of themselves."

Then she jerks the bell with emphasis, and orders up tea.

The great wood-fire is sparkling and crackling cheerily on the hearth, and as the dusk rapidly draws on, its lambent reflections play and dance over the old-fashioned furniture, and throw gleams of light to the farthest corners of the room. Betty, making tea with her hat and jacket thrown off, her hair all straying over her forehead, and the glow which the walk home has brought back to her cheek illuminating her eyes also, is so different a creature from the very fine young lady in her tinsel and

gewgaws who presided there the evening before, that Harry has quite forgotten the first picture in the second.

He is sitting in the chimney-corner himself; Lady Graeme is on the sofa with her little table beside her, her bonnet-strings untied, and her shawl loosened at the throat; while Miss Williams, prim and starched, draws in her chair to the tea-table.

Bee goes the round, waiting on them all, in spite of Harry's faint protests, and still feebler movements. He looks up laughing in her face, and she orders him to sit still, and they understand each other perfectly. Harry begins to think that he had not the worst of the bargain in coming home; it really was rather slow in the wood till that one moment when the little buck came in sight; and who could say that he would have knocked over another as clean and fair? Who could have promised him another shot at all?

Besides which, he is conscious of his self-sacrifice, the women have openly acknowledged it, and he knows that even the boys and the sportsmen were not more blinded than they chose to be.

"May I have a little, a very little more?"

Of course he may—there is plenty. If there were not, some one else might go without—Arthur, for instance—she will not be particular in keeping anything for *him*, you may be sure.

Her mother's cup comes back likewise. Lady

Graeme will have another, or half another, if Bee can promise that it will be quite as good as the last ; and then Miss Williams follows suit ; lastly, the tea-maker drains the pot on her own account, and with grim satisfaction doubles up the last thin slice of brown bread-and-butter. They can ring for more if they want it.

As this tray was only supposed to be served up for the two elderly ladies' modest refreshment, the little minx knows that she can shelter herself ; so she takes up her supplies, comes away from the tea-table, and gets into the other corner of the fireplace with the utmost content.

"How dark it is growing ! I hope they have stopped by this time !" exclaims Lady Graeme, anxiously.

Captain Blount looks at his watch. "They were to stop at half-past four. It is nearly five now."

Not five yet ! Duncan must have brought tea earlier than usual.

"Because you rang for it, mother. We always get earlier and earlier at this season. I was quite ready for mine."

"So you ought ; you had no luncheon."

Pray, how does he know what she had ? Bee assures him that she did have luncheon.

"What ! How much ?"

She had *some*.

He shakes his head at her, she shakes hers back

at him; the other two cannot help laughing at them.

"If I were to tell Lady Graeme——" He is not going to tell tales, but she thinks he is, and gives him such a frown, turning her face aside to do so, as chills poor Harry's veins.

He stops short, of course; then upsets his empty cup on the rug to account for it, and wonders what she meant? What a frown it was! That girl has a notion of keeping people in order, evidently. The subject must be changed as smartly as may be; and so, "How much sooner does it become dark here than in the south, should you say?" inquires Captain Blount.

"An hour, is it not, mamma? But this is the darkest day we have had. Of course it is; this is the 21st, the shortest day."

"Glorious December weather! You should have been with us to-day, Lady Graeme; such a sight from the hill——"

"Only you were talking so fast to papa that you had no time to look at it."

Oho, Miss Betty! a little of the Beatrix peeped out then.

Well, Sir Charles is delightful company; he never met any one so charming, he—— and in the middle of the panegyric the object of it pokes his head in at the window.

"Well, here we are, here we are! You did not

expect us back so soon, eh, Janet? No more sport though, Blount. At least Arthur and I had none; the boys ran down that wounded buck, however. He did not go far. That makes four in all; two to me, and one to each of you. We'll have them brought round for mamma to see."

Apparently he forgets that some one else may not care for the spectacle; but Bee remains behind, as mamma cheerfully acquiesces, leaves her comfortable corner, and goes out into the chilly air, to take all the interest she can in the accounts of the chase, and hear her lord descant upon the spoil.

Arthur comes into the drawing-room rather sulky, and inclined to be ashamed of himself; which state of feeling is not improved by finding the other two so comfortably ensconced by the fire, and nothing but empty cups standing about.

There never was such a house! Anywhere else there would have been a second tea waiting! The room is like an oven with that great furnace of a fire! Why did not Bee—and he jangles the bell with a peal that will be instantly recognised as his below stairs—why did she not give proper orders?

No thanks to Bee; but at this moment the door opens, and the second tea is triumphantly displayed by Duncan.

Duncan had heard the party returning afar off, and guessed what the captain would want. The

stranger should see that everything was done in style at Castle Graeme.

Alas ! it is lost on Harry ! he only feels the relief of Arthur's silence, and his sitting down instead of fuming about the room.

As for Arthur's sister, she wonders why it is always before other people that he shows to such disadvantage : he can be pleasant enough when they are alone ; but whenever any one is there, it seems as if he tried to make himself disagreeable. She has no idea, poor little woman, that the same effort, otherwise directed, robs her, too, of half her attractiveness. She sees it plainly in Arthur ; he is sometimes vaguely provoked with the same in her : but neither recognises the root of the evil.

Thus Betty has been so unaffectedly charming throughout the day, that it is a sad pity she resolves upon being so in the evening. She is asked to sing, and complies ; but, with much turning over of her portfolio, chooses an Italian air, suitable for a powerful and accomplished soprano.

Bee's voice is low, and naturally sweet, and the boys like to hear it. One of them has eagerly demanded "Huntingtower," and another begs for the pathetic "When we two parted ;" but she prefers "La Fioraja,"—and accordingly there is a dead silence at the close, broken only by the most lukewarm of murmurs from Captain Blount.

Harry's correct ear is vexed by the performance, and Lady Graeme would rather have seen Beatrix do as her brothers asked her.

"Now, old fellow, it is your turn."

Oh, if Captain Blount will! She was only turning over the pages, had not fixed on anything, but perhaps she could play his accompaniment?

"Not a bit of it; he plays his own. Go ahead, Harry. Don't be modest, Harry. Give us 'Bid me—Bid me——' what is it again?"

"Bid me discourse?" tries old-fashioned Miss Williams, whom no amount of bidding in that direction would have had the slightest effect upon.

"Ay, that's it. Bid me discourse upon the lady, you know, Harry. Blue and violet eyes, and all the rest of it."

Harry knows well enough, sits down, and begins to troll out in a rich easy baritone—

"Bid me not the lady praise,
Who hath joined vows with mine—

Go and find a maiden free,
For my love hath promised me."

The three boys cluster round him, their six eyes fixed upon his face, mute and deeply attentive. At the close each heaves a deep sigh, and Tom breaks out with enthusiasm, "That *was* jolly!"

Then they relapse into silence again, waiting for more, and so does every one else in the room.

"What arms the soldier for the field?"

sings Harry melodiously—

"'Tis love impels him on,
By love his fields are won,
For truest love with courage ever is united."

Their rapt attention, their wonder-stricken faces so close to his! The singer can hardly proceed, but finds it very pleasant flattery nevertheless.

More, more, they must have more. He is to go on till they tell him to stop. His young tyrants grow quite clamorous between whiles, but instantly hush, and hold their breaths during the performance.

Arthur regards the group with favour. He asked for the song, and it is his friend who is showing off so finely; but poor Bee is altogether out in the cold. No one wants any more "La Fioraja's;" and though Captain Blount does insist on getting off the music-stool at last, and politely begs that she will take his place, she can hardly comply with a request so little urgent.

For the present, at all events, her star has set with the brotherhood. They only await her negative, and again seize their victim.

Harry good-naturedly racks his brains for old English, Scotch, and Irish ditties, to please them, till they are reluctantly forced off to bed.

"Thank you, sir," says little Charlie, putting out his hand; on which the other two say, "Thank you, sir," likewise.

"And, I say, you'll give us some more to-morrow, won't you?" adds Tom.

"That was really *very* nice!" Who would have believed it possible? There is the old laird actually wide awake in his big arm-chair, and with folded hands listening all the time.

"Hum, hum, hum, hum," he echoes. He used to sing himself in his young days.

Lady Graeme and Miss Williams are both pleasantly grateful; Arthur applauds graciously; Bee is the only one who has nothing to say, no remark to make; she is very deeply engaged with her embroidery, and finds the wools so difficult to shade by candle-light, that she has no eyes for anything beyond them.

Harry's reflections afterwards: "She was put out, I suppose: but I can't help it. I can't stand hearing those things murdered, and that shake! Girls ought never to attempt anything beyond a ballad, and I doubt if she could accomplish that. But I am afraid I was rather bad to her."

Bee's reflections: "I never, *never* will! After all the hours I have spent over it, and I thought I had got it right at last. Such an exhibition! If I had only done as the boys wanted! I know they hate that thing, and mamma said she was

quite tired of hearing it over and over in the next room. How beautifully he sings! Oh dear!"

That night in her dreams there runs a soft refrain—

"'Tis love impels him on,
By love his fields are won."

And the voice of the singer is like that of Harry Blount.

Shooting, fishing, and singing, Harry finds the pleasant days fly only too fast.

He acknowledges a mistake, too, with regard to Bee's musical attainments.

In quavering tones she goes through "Huntingtower" one evening, and he is quite surprised. With honest eagerness he begs another, and with genuine diffidence she complies. The encouragement, however, has steadied and strengthened her voice, and each word, a rare beauty, falls distinctly on the ear. What has such a singer to do with "La Fioraja's"? This is quite perfect in its way; and he is pleased, delighted, to acknowledge it.

And now one more?

"Ae fond kiss, and then we sever;
Ae farewell! alas, for ever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee."

Stop, Bee, stop! This is all very well when you have only four insensate brothers round you, listening to the strains; but it is too bad, it is not fair,

to set other pulses throbbing, other veins tingling thus.

For poor Harry is susceptible to the slightest touch of music, and he is hanging over the piano with his head down; and who can tell what havoc may be begun by those simple, tender, passionate words?

“Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met or never parted,
We had ne’er been broken hearted.”

“Thank you.”

The same that was said after the Italian flourish, but now in what a different tone! And when she rises, amidst a shower of hearty plaudits from the farther end of the room, Harry’s head is still down on the piano, and he does not stir nor speak again. She turns to him.

Now he must do his part.

He is not in the mood; he begs her to go on. No, indeed—every one is waiting for him; hers is not worth listening to: he must, indeed.

Will she play for him, then?

Certainly, if he wishes. Yes, here is one whose accompaniment he has almost forgotten; and he puts it before her, and she plays; while he leans over her and sings, inhaling the faint sweet scent of the tea-rose in her hair—till, all at once, Lady Graeme thinks she has had enough of this.

"Arthur," says his mother, carelessly, that evening, "how long does Captain Blount propose staying with us? Have you any idea?"

"Oh, he'll stay as long as we want him, mother. Some time next week, I daresay. He seems quite contented."

So she thinks.

A word with Sir Charles next. "Is there any need for those young men always coming into the drawing-room in the afternoons? Can they not amuse themselves in some other way?"

"Well, they can't shoot, my dear, if you mean that. It is quite too dark after four or half-past four now. A pretty state of mind you would be in if they tried it!"

"But there is the gun-room; why do they not find something to do there?"

"Ay, why don't they? Ask them. I am sure I have no objection; they may go where they like for me. If they took my advice, they would clean their guns, and that would be something for them to do. I never gave a gun to a keeper yet."

"Well, tell them so yourself."

"I have told them. I have told Arthur scores of times; but he is too fine a gentleman nowadays. Blount would do his fast enough; but I can't say anything to him, or it would look as if I grudged him the man's time."

Well, strange to say, they do not appear at tea

that afternoon, and there is a grand uproar going on in the boys' den, a glorious confusion of sounds which completely satisfies Lady Graeme. Bee went by to the garden with her basket and scissors some little time ago; there is little to be got in the greenhouse now but chrysanthemums; that yellow rose was the last, and the bouquets for the boys' button-holes on Christmas Day finished off the geraniums: still she must try to get something.

A deplorable-looking greenhouse indeed! "I am glad Arthur is not here to see," thinks his sister. "He would be cross with Anderson. Certainly Anderson might manage better. Not a shred upon this poor modestum, and only that one solitary fuchsia! It is rather hard when we have such good houses; they ought to be hotter, I am sure. I suspect Anderson stints the coals, or lets the fires out at night: there is something wrong," concludes the shrewd little lady. "I shall look into this, Mr Anderson."

Snip, snip go the chrysanthemums, and suddenly the door at the far end opens to admit two tall figures.

"Holloa, Bee! making havoc among the preserves here, are you? Harry says he has never seen the garden. Come in, Harry; don't knock against the wall: not much to be seen, is there? *I say!* Not much! I don't believe there is anything!"

"I have been cutting a good many lately,

Arthur, indeed I have. We looked quite gay a few weeks ago."

"Of course, when the flowers are out everywhere."

"We have had the pleasure of them indoors—in more ways than one," says Harry, softly.

"Well, come along." Arthur is in advance. "Here are the grapes, at all events. They are not gone, and that's a blessing. Have some? Here, I'll catch this bunch, and we'll divide it. Come in here, Bee."

"But I want some more flowers, and some ferns."

"Come here first, and we'll help you afterwards."

They do help, each after his fashion: Arthur sits smoking on a hot pipe; while Blount dutifully goes the round, scissors in hand, with the greatest interest and most absorbing care selecting leaves, and stems, and fronds of fern.

Is there not one little bit for himself?

No, not a bit, not an atom.

Just one tiny fern?

He would not care for that.

Yes he would—if she gave it him.

Arthur.—"Well, I say, you ought to have got a roomful by this time. Is that all you have to show for it?"

Shall they go through the back settlements?

It is nothing much of a round, and they may as

well be out as in the house till it is dark. Harry agrees cordially; Bee goes too, as a matter of course; and fancy poor Lady Graeme's feelings when, long after this, she sees the three coming in together, taking their utmost ease.

To make matters worse, it is so late that she has gone up to her room to dress, and there is no possibility of going down again. She hears the party go into the great fire-lit drawing-room, and is powerless to do anything beyond sending down her maid to warn Miss Graeme how late it is. Miss Graeme catches the maid, and sends her for water for the flowers; and of course they are all late for dinner—and Bee, latest of all, is as innocent as a lamb.

“I had to arrange the flowers, mamma, after I came in.”

What can mamma say?

Some more guests are expected to arrive the next day, and Bee will have to entertain them; she will no longer be the only young woman of the party, and it is hardly possible that she should see so much of Captain Blount as she has done lately. Lady Graeme likes Harry, you understand, and is not in the least anxious to be rid of him on her own account; but she has a wholesome horror of flirting young officers, and she fancies there is something, a very slight something, of this sort between him and Beatrix.

No blame attaches to Bee.

She was never in her life more free from that manner which distresses her mother so much, only she is quiet, very quiet, and absent, too, sometimes—it would be as well, perhaps, if Arthur would find out, without any breach of hospitality,—Blount has been with them nearly a fortnight—would he?

No, Arthur can't; and what's more, he won't. What does she want Harry away for? There never was a fellow who gave less trouble in a house, and they might be thankful to have him to amuse those other people who were coming. Just when they have got together rather a nice party, she wants to break it up. It is always the way with any friend of his.

He is vociferating this at the top of his voice, when the door opens and Bee comes in.

In spite of herself, his mother makes an attempt to stop him, but in vain. He appeals to Beatrix. "Look here, Betty, isn't it too bad? Here is mamma wanting me to send Harry off, just when he is beginning to enjoy himself. It was precious slow for him when he first came; and now, just when he will have those girls to talk to, he is to be shunted without ceremony."

"My dear, I never thought of such a thing!" cries the poor lady in her vexation. "I would not on any account have it breathed to him. It was only if Arthur had any way of finding out—Macky

—the room,—oh, no matter in the least, Arthur, my dear; say no more about it.”

Bee says never a word.

The Cathcarts, the Malcolms, and divers other waifs and strays, are to be with them that day, Fires are blazing in the rooms along the gallery, and Macky bustles about with her blankets and towels, and busy important face.

“Miss Bee, there’s oysters wanted.”

“I can’t get them, Macky; it’s too late—the tide is over the bed long ago.”

“It will be oot in the mornin’.”

“I can’t go to-morrow. How *can* I?”

“Weel, ye ken, ye’ll let naebody gang but yersel’; and ’deed, there’s, nane kens whaur it is.”

“The boys do; can’t one of them go?”

“Oh ay, they’ll *say* they will; and when the time comes, there’s something else, an’ they’ll be angered if I say a word. Aweel, ye maun want them then; an’ there’ll be nae soup to the dinner, an’ the Captain’ll no’ be pleased. Hoots! ye might gang afore breakfast, an’ whae’s to ken?”

Miss Bee ponders.

“Whae’s to ken?” The old woman knows her weak point, and directly appeals to it. If nobody knew, she could go well enough before breakfast; the tide will be out then, and the bed soon uncovered. She could be back before any of their

guests were stirring. The boys would help if they knew, but they would also most certainly betray her. She had best go alone.

It is barely light ere she is on the shore, enjoying with all her heart the clear, keen, salt-laden air; the ripple of the flowing tide; the wild, weird sunrise on the hills. There is no time to lose, for the water is coming in; but her oyster-bed is bare, and there lie the rough, many-tinted shells on their backs, and sides, and faces—a goodly sight in the eyes of the young fisherwoman.

Not the very largest, nor yet those too small, does she choose. Here is a couple adhering back to back—"twenty-eight, twenty-nine," they count for; one with an empty fellow to it still holding on, makes thirty; three smooth, uninteresting, irreproachable specimens are respectively thirty-one, two, and three, and she pauses to consider how many more will be required.

A step upon the sands.

Captain Blount!

One by one the oysters fall in a slow stream out of the net, and make a little heap below. The net itself sinks upon the seaweed. Beatrix stands motionless, turned to stone. What miserable chance has brought him there? Is it a chance at all? Has he seen her? Did he follow her?

Yes, in the easiest fashion, he observes, that having seen her start with her net, he guessed where

she was bound for, and thought he might be of use. Where are her brothers? Lazy fellows! could none of them have got up to help her? It is delightful, nothing could be pleasanter, as she had often told him. Told him? Yes; and promised to show him the bed too; of late she has dropped all desire to be "fine" with Harry; but to come upon her thus!

Sooth to tell, Bee is rather an odd figure.

A rough serge petticoat; an old frayed and stained plaid wound closely round her; a felt hat, which has buffeted through many a winter, and which is now pulled down over her ears,—these make up her attire.

But it is not altogether of this that Bee is thinking. He will make her late—they may be seen—and what would be thought of such conduct?

She must make the best of it, and hurry home. She is much obliged to him for coming; he will be of great use. Will he kindly pick up the oysters? Very grave all the time—not a smile upon her face. Harry begins to feel he has made a mistake, and in clumsy fashion attempts to repair it.

"So this is the oyster-bed? What a famous idea it is! nobody could possibly discover it unless they knew beforehand. But do you never lose it yourself?"

"I can't go wrong, because even when it is high water there are landmarks. We sometimes come in the boat."

"And you gathered them all yourself?"

"All of this set. Thank you. Oh never mind those; we have quite enough now."

"Some of these are not so large as those under the rock."

Of course not—she knows that as well as he does. Why *will* he not be quicker?

Will she not show him where the bank is? She cannot,—it is round that point; they have no time. May he not help her over the rocks? She will get along best alone.

Harry submissively shoulders the net, and they pick their way along almost in silence.

Bee is dreadfully fretted. She cannot imagine how it has grown so late, would have run had she been alone, and has neither eyes nor ears for her companion. All her attention is absorbed in one idea.

It is nine o'clock now, and even though they do go through the shrubbery, and creep in at the garden door, there are chances innumerable that they will meet some one.

Harry is lost in thought. Their pace grows faster and faster, and through the woodland path they hurry as if pursued by demons; but though it is Beatrix who is out of breath, it is Blount's heart that is beating.

"Miss Graeme, is there any very urgent reason or this haste?"

Urgent, indeed! What would the man have? Her appearance, her oysters, above all, his company—she is boiling over with indignation.

“Can we not stop to rest here for a moment?”

Oh yes, he is very welcome to stop—she would prefer to go on herself; but she begs he will do as he likes: his hesitating manner and preoccupied voice is the last drop in her cup of wrath.

“We are about as late as we can be, that’s all.”

“Then if we are late we need not try to be in time,” philosophically. “Sir Charles is punctual to a minute, and there is the prayer-bell.”

“I knew it!”

“You will still go in?”

Still go in! Beatrix absolutely stares at him.

He is not looking at her, his eyes are on the ground,—“Because,” he says, very quietly, “I am going away to-day.”

“Oh!”

“I thought you were going—with Arthur—to look for wild-duck?” After a moment’s pause, she does her best to speak, and to look composedly.

“I thought so too, till this morning; but my plans are changed. I must ask him to send me over to Striven in the dogcart.”

“Yes, that is the best way. You will have a charming drive—take care of the oysters—it is through the most beautiful part of the country.”

"So I hear. Beatrix, can you not understand me?"

"Not at all, Captain Blount."

Head in air, she marches forward, up the steps to the garden entrance, along the gallery with a rush, and like Godiva of old, unseen she has regained her sanctuary.

Now, what of poor deserted Harry?

"I shall have to go," he reflects. "As usual, I have put my foot in it. If I had only given her time! I think she likes me somehow, but it looks odd. That she saw it was coming is certain, and did her best to stop it. Oh confound these oysters! What am I to do with them? I don't know what to suppose; and she is such a—— she has bewitched me, I think! If I had only made off last week! I was a fool to stay on like this. Here, George, take the net, please." And Captain Blount, rejoiced at least to be free from such an incubus, joins the breakfast-party.

Many others are late besides Bee, and no one can remark upon it. She slips in at last, comes up to kiss her mother from behind, and gives a generally cheerful "Good morning" all round.

Harry gives her one look. "Oho, my little Betty!" says he to himself, "this alters the aspect of things somewhat."

For all the cold-water douching and eau-de-Cologne applications in the world cannot hide from him that tell-tale flush over the eyebrows. She

waited as long as she dared, poor child, and thought, felt certain, there were no traces left; but are there ever no traces when one has the clue to look for them?

Harry is as merry as a cricket down at his end of the table after this discovery, and he and Arthur start the moment after breakfast in pursuit of the wild-duck. Beatrix hears all the arrangement, sees the start, and wonders; but she dares not ask any one about that dogcart. No orders have been given, she sees that; it is possible that Sir Charles has stopped him, that he has been prevailed on by the outcry of the boys.

Harry, you see, is a favourite wherever he goes. Arthur may brag to his regiment of Castle Graeme, and to his family at Castle Graeme, of his friends in the regiment, but no one thinks a bit the better of him. His airs, speeches, side hints, take nobody in. If he would really gain popularity, the hearts of men and women, he must take a lesson from his friend.

"He is the best company for Arthur that can be," Lady Graeme acknowledges at last.

"He is the most humble fellow I ever met!" exclaims Sir Charles.

"So natural!" says she.

"So unassuming!" says he.

"And you never hear him tell a good thing of himself," further cries the old laird; not so obtuse

as he looks ; he has his own ideas about people. "And when Arthur tries to trot him out, he just looks annoyed, though he is so good-natured. Who would have believed that Arthur's swell Guardsman would have turned out such a simple creature !"

Bee was not present during this little episode ; but she knows with what a kindly eye her father regards Harry, and he is going to stay, that is evident. Is there any hope, then ?

"I did *not* know what he meant, and I don't choose to be spoken to in that way, and—and altogether !" cries the poor girl, in her impatient heart. "But I need not have run away from him exactly, perhaps. It was too provoking. I might just have waited a moment, and yet shown that I was angry too. I am always so silly whenever I try to be dignified. Of course if he was thinking of *that*, he was not likely to remember the oysters, and my hat, and all those stupid things. I wish I had stayed."

Entertaining the visitors is very hard on Sir Charles's only daughter this day.

The sportsmen did not come in till quite late—indeed, till the party are reassembling in evening attire. They have had a six-mile drive home, and have shot three couple, consequently they have been in no hurry, and feel that they have a right to be waited for.

Dinner is announced as Blount walks in ; and Lady Graeme is disconcerted, and the Miss Mal-

colms highly aggrieved, for he stalks straight along the middle of the room, without looking to right or to left, and offers his arm to Beatrix.

The previous evening he had been told to take in Miss Malcolm, and it might be supposed he would of himself know to do the same again. Bee was sitting on the settee in the far-off window. With downcast eyes she takes the proffered arm, dares not look at her mother or at any one as she passes, but follows mutely her father and Lady Susan Cathcart out of the room.

Such an unprecedented arrangement can have only one meaning in the Miss Malcolms' eyes. If it has gone as far as that, they have nothing to say; and recovering themselves, good-humouredly take each other in, after Major Cathcart and Mrs Malcolm, Mr Crichton-Blair and Miss Williams. Arthur makes abundant compensation to his two fair neighbours as soon as he appears; the other delinquents pop into their places as the soup goes round, and the New Year's Day dinner-party is the liveliest that can be imagined.

This is what Harry had reckoned upon. He has Bee all to himself now; and though not a word of import has passed between them, she knows, and feels that he knows too, that the victory is his. How has he learned this? I for one cannot tell. Perhaps by the softened, downcast glance; perhaps by the hesitating whispers, the flickering colour,

the wistful smile, that only half replies to his ingratiating undertones. Anyhow he finds himself quite happy.

The decorations? Oh yes; they are going to put them up to-night; the boys have been cutting out turnip lanterns for the shrubbery, and the evergreens are in the outer hall now. They were brought in an hour ago.

He may help, may he not? They will all help; they always do.

So in they all go among the piles of green—Bee first, with Charlotte and Lizzie on each side of her, Arthur, Blount, Jack, Tom, Charlie, and a young Cathcart following.

The first thing to be done is to tie the strings, next to select the boughs, then to hang them.

It is not particularly well done. Anderson and two of his men would do the whole far better in half an hour; but that is not the thing. They enjoy it. The girls like trotting backwards and forwards, pricking their soft fingers, and tearing their fragile garments; the boys like standing on ladders and ordering about the pretty slaves.

All but Harry.

Harry has not mounted a step; but he and Beatrix have created a wonderful and complicated work of art in the bow-window, with which they will allow no one to interfere. They have been at it very quietly for half an hour or so, quite overlooked

in the hubbub outside, shut in by a vast wall of prickly branches.

"Ah!" cries she, with a start.

"Let me see." He takes her hand. It was nothing but a holly-prick; but ere she can withdraw it, he has stooped forward and left another touch there.

Little Bee, do you understand *now*?

"My dear, I had no idea he was in earnest. Of course, if you and papa approve; but remember he is almost a stranger to us, and she is such a child—she has seen nothing of the world."

"If she were to see the world till she was fifty, mamma, she would never see a better fellow."

"That was not what I meant, dear Arthur. I have nothing in the world to say against him; I could only have wished, poor dear, that she were a little older, and had had some sort of experience."

"She would never get that down here, and she may as well get it under Harry's wing as any one's; *he* has had plenty, at any rate."

Yes, there is hope in that, and truth too. "Mamma," continues Arthur very seriously, and as if he had not said the same thing many times before, "can't you see what a good fellow Harry is? None of our fellows are like him: and he will be the very making of Bee, I know; for sometimes—he makes me—ashamed of myself."

THE NIGHT-WANDERER OF AN AFGHAUN FORT.

[MAGA. JAN. 1868.]

I ALMOST fancy I hear the critical and fastidious reader exclaiming, "Under what pretence has the description of a few days' visit to a fort situated in an obscure valley of the distant Elboorz and in the remote East found a place in the revered pages of *Maga*? Has not the tide of modern literature, at least its lighter portion, followed of recent years the tide of emigration? Has it not flowed west in this century as it went east in the days when Voltaire wrote '*Zadig*'? Has not the negro superseded the fakir, the prairie the jungle, the setting the rising sun? And are not tales of rapacious Bedooeens and stifling simooms and thirsty caravans now a mere drug in the literary market? whereas, tinged with the once loved halo of Eastern romance, they were wont to make our grandmothers' ears to tingle when they were little girls." With reasonings similar to these ringing in my ears, I lay the following pages before the public with the

greatest possible hesitation, for I cannot but feel apprehensive that in these days an Eastern story will scarcely be deemed a desideratum in Western literature.

The reader shall not be wearied with any precise relation of the circumstances which once led to my being for some days the honoured guest of an Afghaun chief.¹ To those circumstances in themselves no particular interest now attaches itself, nor were they in any way connected with the events of which I am about to attempt a description in the following pages. These events came under my immediate observation during the period of my visit, and they have ever remained indelibly fixed upon my memory from the fact of their having been involved in a certain mystery, which at the time of their occurrence strongly excited and aroused my curiosity and attention. Suffice it to say that many years ago I found myself approaching, after a long night's ride, and just as day was breaking, one of those gloomy gorges that abound in the vast range of the Elboorz Mountains. Only those who have experienced the discomforts that are usually attendant upon a long night passed in the saddle are aware how eagerly the weary and wayworn traveller awaits the approach of day, and

¹ Though dwelling in Persian territory, the occupants of the fort were Afghauns. Their ancestors about a century previous had left their own country, and having settled in Persia had become tributary to that power.

with what joy he welcomes the first glad glimmer of the dawn. When the momentarily increasing light afforded me an opportunity of looking upon that which for so many hours had been hidden under the impenetrable veil of night, I saw that a bleak and inhospitable region lay behind and on both sides of me. The desolate plain stretching itself monotonously away resembled a sea whose distant shores on three sides were merged and lost to view in the low-lying hazy mists of early day. The parched and thirsty soil was pierced only here and there by some few stunted bushes of the *asafoetida*-plant, whose branches, totally void of verdure, were like a skeleton's bones, so white, bare, and bleached did they look in the cold light of the young morning. In front, and distant about a mile, were some rugged slopes and hills that beyond assumed the proportions of a lofty chain of mountains, beneath some of whose snow-capped peaks fleecy rings of cloud and vapour rested. By the time that the stars, my companions throughout the night, had paled and absolutely vanished in the brilliant light that so marvellously soon had steeped all things in heaven and on earth, my eyes, longing to catch a glimpse of the fort to which I was wending my way, were busy straining anxiously towards the spot where the beaten track under my horse's feet plunged amid the hills and so lost itself to view. And though to my disappointment it was

impossible to trace the road any further than this spot, I could make out something of its general direction by allowing my gaze to follow what looked like a deep black shadow darkening the mountain-side. This shadow as it appeared with clearly depicted edges trended upwards, and after some few bold zig-zags finally ended in a point sharp as a needle's, not far below the region where eternal snows glittered in the glorious rays that heralded the approach of the great god of day, as yet himself invisible. The dark mass, sharply traced as its edges were, was all that it was then possible for me to see of a great gorge that like a mighty sabre gash cleft the brawny flank of the mountain, and which, from information I was in possession of, I concluded contained somewhere in its gloomy depths the fort to which I was bound. But as to the distance that still lay between me and my morning's goal I was ignorant, and so I remained till I and my small party of followers arrived within half a mile or so of the foot of the hills in our front. Then as I rode gazing at the rugged majesty of the mountain-sides that reared themselves a stupendous barrier across the road, my attention was attracted by a party of horsemen debouching from the hills in single file into the plain below. These horsemen, to the number of some thirty or forty, as far as I could judge from a hurried estimation I made of them, no sooner appeared to feel level ground

beneath their horses' feet than they threw themselves into a broken and irregular line and came sweeping towards me.

So suddenly had they come into view, and so rapidly were they approaching, that I had scarcely time to look round and range my small party of followers in front of the baggage-mules when the shouts of the leading horsemen and the wild music of kettledrums reached my ears. From the tactics of the swiftly advancing line I soon became aware that no hostile attack was intended. A few shots indeed were fired, but the long, slender "jezails" were pointed sometimes straight at the heart of a curvetting comrade in the ranks, sometimes swung round to the rear, over the streaming courser's tail as if to dispose of an imaginary pursuing enemy. On they came, galloping madly onwards, leaving long lines of dust behind them, and presenting in the bright morning light a most spirited and imposing pageant. The chiefs of the party, riding slightly in advance of the line, were conspicuous in the centre. They rode with loose rein, but when they had approached to a distance of about fifty yards or so of my party they pulled up with a jerk so sharp and sudden that their steeds, furrowing the dry gravelly soil with their hind feet, were brought to an almost instantaneous halt. From these preliminaries, added to the fact that the horsemen were commencing to

range themselves in line along the road, it became at once evident that this was the escort that had been sent out to meet me and conduct me to the Fort. I knew that, this being the case, it would be becoming in me to dismount and meet the two chiefs on foot. I perceived they had already thrown themselves from their saddles and were striding across the plain with that peculiar waddling gait which the Afghanas either affect or cannot avoid when they attempt to walk in their long pointed boots, which were never meant to grace anything but a horseman's legs. Before I had taken a dozen steps I was embraced by the younger of the two men in true Afghaun fashion. This consisted of his throwing his arms round my waist and resting his chin first on my right shoulder and then on my left, I doing the like by him. In the space of a few minutes, the "Khoosh amudeed," the usual welcome, having been given and the ordinary salutations having been addressed in the Persian language, we had remounted and were jogging on our way to the hills in front of us.

As we rode along I had ample time to scan the features and dress of my two companions. The younger of the horsemen, who I learned was the son of the chief in whose house I was shortly to be a guest, was tall, straight as a cypress, and withal singularly handsome. I guessed him to be about five-and-twenty, but he was scarcely twenty,

as he afterwards informed me. He wore a loose flowing brown-coloured cloak made of the soft hair of the mountain-goat. It was fastened across the chest, but the long folds below the fastening were thrown back, and showed beneath a richly brocaded coat made of the finest European cloth. This, sitting close to his figure, displayed his broad shoulders and slender waist to the utmost advantage. Through the folds of a Cachemire shawl which served as a girdle, were passed a brace of silver-mounted pistols and a formidable-looking double-edged dagger. In addition to these arms he wore a sword, and a fowling-piece of English manufacture was slung obliquely across his back. His turban of blue shawl and of the finest texture was wound loosely about the head, the worked ends hanging down picturesquely over his shoulders behind. His boots, made of the wild-ass's skin, were of a light buff colour, and reached almost to the knee. They were very pointed at the toe, and with heels so long and small that walking in them must have been something akin to torture. The young chief was evidently a most finished horseman. His followers, with spears levelled and matchlocks unslung, had spread themselves over the plain and were going through a variety of warlike evolutions. Every now and then one of them would dash across the road and fire his matchlock immediately in front of us, causing the young

chief's horse to rear and plunge and snatch at the sharp bit in a way that put even his horsemanship to the test. But he managed the hot-blooded young animal beneath him at all times with consummate temper and skill. The other of my companions, who now rode upon my left, was a man of very different aspect. A spare shrivelled remnant of a man, who appeared quite at home in the saddle, but to whom heavy beetling brows, a malignant eye, and a Mephistopheles hook to his nose, gave certainly no prepossessing appearance. He was simply attired, and as he rode along his whole thoughts seemed to be concentrated in the attempts that he momentarily made to keep himself protected by his cloak from the chill blasts of the morning air that swept every now and then in sharp gusts across the plain. His reception of me, I remarked, had been cold and distant as compared with that given me by his younger companion. And since we had remounted he had not attempted to address another remark to me of any kind. The young chief, Firamoorz Khan, several times bantered him on his moody silence, but the only answer the old man vouchsafed consisted of a few words that were quite unintelligible, muttered as they were from beneath the voluminous folds of his cloak, under which all but his eyes and nose were buried.

When we reached the hills and had ascended a little way up the first slope, Firamoorz asked

me to turn round and look at the play of his horsemen in the plain below. It was of a most spirited and exciting character. Upon the wide level plain that had looked so desolate and lifeless when I had first beheld it in the morning, a mimic battle was being enacted, in which each horseman, fighting independently of his comrades, attacked or retired as fancy urged. One of these horsemen, dressed in a close-fitting tunic of dark-blue, and armed with a shield, matchlock, and sword, particularly attracted my attention. With reins hanging loose from the saddle-bow, he urged his horse to his utmost speed. At times he would use his matchlock, firing it as he galloped along in every position that it was possible for a horseman to throw himself into, and regain his seat in the saddle. At other times, having slung his matchlock obliquely behind him, and covering his body with his shield, he would draw his sword—the curved scimitar of Khorassan—and keeping it in perpetual movement, would cause it to flicker and gleam and make lines of fire in the brilliant sunlight that now poured over the plain. The horseman, the carrier of the kettledrums, ponderous-looking things swathed in scarlet cloth, had followed us up the slope. He had been standing behind us motionless as a statue, but at a signal from Firamoorz he commenced violently to agitate his wrists, and so the thunder of the drums pealing

forth, the mimic fight below came to an end. The horsemen then, reining in their steeds, came trooping leisurely up the hill towards the spot where we were, and a gaily-dressed, bright-eyed boy having approached Firamoorz, placed a hawk upon his wrist. The order of march was resumed, and by a tortuous winding path we made our way through the hills. From the highest summits of these hills the "teehoo" every now and then sent forth his plaintive and melancholy note. And whenever one of these birds, a sort of small mountain partridge, was flushed by our approach, the hawk was slipped. He seldom failed in bringing the quarry to the ground, so swift and sure was his flight. A horseman would then dash forward over rocks and stones, seize the fluttering helpless thing, and turning towards Mecca the holy, would cut his throat with all possible and orthodox ceremony.

Firamoorz had told me that, from the spot where his party had first met me, his father's fort was distant some two hours' ride; or, as I reckoned it, about seven miles. So that by the time we reached the opening of the great gorge that I had seen and traced in the early morning, the sun's rays were touching the rocky saw-like crest of its western side. Our road, ascending rapidly, clung to the precipitous side of the gorge, whose uppermost edge glowed in light; but where we rode we were in the deep shadow of the opposite side,

which towered aloft like a wall above us. Beneath was a brawling stream, that every here and there, as it leapt from one big boulder to another, formed between them those glassy black pools which are

"The torrent's stillness ere it rush below."

As we proceeded, the gorge contracted, shooting up perpendicularly on both sides, so that we could see only a narrow slip of the bright blue sky above. But, much as I was struck with the wild and savage beauty of the scene, there was not much time, or I should rather say leisure, to look about one, for the path we were pursuing was so steep, and the face of the rock across which it lay so smooth and slippery, that my attention was fully occupied in keeping my horse upon his legs. Where your stirrup-iron dangles over a precipice, scenery loses a certain portion of the attraction which it would otherwise possess. I glanced at the dark silent pools below and the jagged sides of the gorge, but my most earnest gaze was fixed on the great boulders of rock nearer at hand, and over which we were scrambling and clattering. And when we had passed some unusually bad bit of the road without accident, I could not avoid looking ahead and praying that better travelling was near. In consequence of its being impossible for a considerable distance for two horsemen to ride abreast, we went in single file, Firamoorz immedi-

ately preceding me. Many a time I trembled for the safety of the young chief, for his hot-blooded fiery steed, rendered impatient by the oft-recurring irregularities of the path, rushed at the great boulders we were crossing in a manner that made it appear inevitable that sooner or later his legs would slip from under him; and a fall on such a road could not well have had other than consequences most fatal. I silently wondered at the calm self-possession, nerve, and temper of the young chief under the circumstances. As if deeming that the animal was perfectly cognisant of the danger that threatened from the yawning gulf below, he seldom or never checked him with the bit, leaving him to his own wild way of surmounting all obstacles. When I say that the art of shoeing horses is at its very rudest stage among the Afghauns,—simply a flat piece of iron nailed over the hoof,—it will be at once understood what a disadvantage a horse so shod labours under when crossing rocky ground.

Whenever conversation was practicable, Fira-moorz did not fail to enliven the way with his remarks. My English hunting-saddle particularly attracted his astonishment and curiosity. He seemed to think it was made of wood. About it and my dress he made many quaint and original remarks. His frank manner and the brusque informal way in which he let me know what was

passing in his mind were vastly amusing, and contrasted agreeably with the customs and manner of speech of the Persians—a people of whom I had shortly previous had some experience, and to whom Rochefoucauld's saying, that "words were meant to conceal our thoughts," most pertinently applies. Looking at my old well-worn saddle, he said that it was the first he had ever seen, and he wondered that I should prefer to ride on a thing so small and with a surface so glossy and slippery, instead of upon one such as he was using, where the rider had plenty of room to turn round and shift himself about in, and where the knee pressed a surface that was both rough and soft. But with the stirrup-irons he was particularly pleased, and he frankly declared that, in his estimation, they were worth more than all the saddles "Feringestan" could produce.

Our progress, owing to the roughness of the road, was at times but slow, so that the sun was high in the heavens before we reached the turn in the gorge whence the Fort of the young chief's father was visible. From this point it appeared directly in front of us, but on the other side of the gorge, which here opened out to a breadth of about a mile or so, revealing behind a grand panorama of mountains piled on mountains. We made an abrupt descent till we came to a ford in the stream, where the horses of the party, many of them still bearing traces of their morning's gallop, were allowed a

copious drink of water. On the opposite side, gently ascending to the walls of the "Killa" or fort, was an open bit of ground. Over this the Afghaun horsemen, clapping their heavy stirrup-irons to their horses' sides, galloped some three or four times at speed. This galloping a horse for some ten minutes or so at his best pace, immediately after he has been watered, renders him, at least so say the Afghauns and Turcomans, hardy, and greatly improves his wind. As we rode up the open space, with the horsemen galloping hither and thither, some small cannon, mounted on the walls of the Fort, bellowed out a rude welcome, which, being caught by a multitude of echoes, boomed solemnly away, and was lost amid the distant rocky peaks. The Fort of F—— appeared to be built of sunburnt brick throughout—a large massive and ancient structure, with bastions and connecting curtains which in some places were loop-holed for defence. The muzzles of the guns that were being fired projected slightly from the parapet, on the top of which they rested. At each discharge, a cloud of something which was not smoke, issued from beneath the muzzle. On approaching nearer, it was evident that the concussion of each discharge brought down a piece of the wall, a matter apparently of but small moment to the Afghaun artillerymen, who were to be seen busy above the guns, loading and firing away with the

utmost indifference to the damage that was being done to the defences. As we finally entered the massive gateway, we brushed by the inhabitants, old and young, men, women, and children, who were standing crowding both sides of the entrance. The men were mostly strong, sturdy-looking fellows, with a rude glow of health upon their cheeks. They were clad in coarse-coloured linen, with a sheepskin jacket or cloak hitched upon their shoulders, the arms hanging down empty behind, like those of a hussar jacket. Of the women, generally speaking, no portion of the features was visible. A white thick veil fell over the eyes, and the figure was entirely enveloped in blue drapery. Here and there amongst the crowd might be seen a hand wrinkled with toil and old age, holding down the veil with a determination so severe that it would have baffled the very eye of a lynx to catch even a glimpse of the possessor's faded charms. Interspersed among the gazing groups were the "Reesh-Suffeed," the greybeards of the place, who, with heads swathed in ponderous turbans, looked as picturesque and patriarchal as if they had stepped down from some old Italian fresco. The children, some of them ruddy and beautiful, ran forward, clapped their hands, and looked half in wonderment, half in alarm, at the novel sight of a white face and a pith helmet. The dust raised by our horses' tread, as we passed under the massive gate-

way, was stifling. We rode through a small bazaar, whose principal commodities appeared to be dried fruits and grain, and whose principal occupants were ragged beggars, who had located themselves in every point of vantage-ground upon our road. These, as we passed, struck their breasts, and then stood with upturned palms while they called down the blessings of Allah upon our heads. After a ride of a few hundred yards, we found ourselves on the edge of the great moat that surrounded the keep or citadel of the place. Here the young chief rode forward, and, making a signal to some "Sirbauz,"¹ who were lounging about on the other side, a drawbridge was let down, and we clattered over the rough uneven planks like a troop of horsemen entering a castle of some feudal lord of the middle ages. In a small yard, immediately inside the main wall of the citadel, we dismounted, and Firamoorz, taking me by the hand, and pronouncing many a "Bismillah," led me into the interior. As I looked behind me I saw the drawbridge being slowly raised, and then, as the great bolts fell with a loud clank, I felt that, though a guest, I was for the time being a prisoner. Firamoorz, familiar with every turn and twist of the tortuous way, walked forward with a quick step; but, as the passages along which we went were ill-lighted, and some not lighted at all, a slower pace would

¹ Lit., Player with the hand.

to me have been preferable ; for a long ride had left me cramped and stiff, so that I more than once stumbled over the irregularities of the ground. As far as I could judge, we were passing along under some of the principal buildings of the citadel. At length my guide, taking me up a flight of rude stone steps, brought me into a small yard. On the other side of this yard was the room that had been allotted to me as the place of my abode during my stay in the Fort. Here Firamoorz left me, but not before he had told me that the bath would be ready, and at my disposal, in an hour.

When the young Chief had taken his departure, I seized the opportunity of looking about me to see whereabouts I was in the citadel, the principal points of which I had scanned from the exterior as we entered. I found I was at a large bastion at the south-west angle. The yard to which we had ascended formed part of the summit of the bastion, and a parapet, more or less broken, led round it. The door through which we had entered was at the base of what looked like an old deserted dwelling, for the wooden shutters, which had closed the apertures of the windows, had been partially rent away, leaving the interior exposed. The walls were cracked and crumbling, presenting throughout a ruined and dilapidated appearance. Of windows in my room there were two—one overlooking the moat of the keep ; the other was on the side of the

terrace, and raised above its level some three or four feet. They were mere apertures. Glass there was none ; but a rude wooden shutter half closed the terrace window. My apartment, which had evidently not been inhabited for a long time, bore traces of having been swept and garnished. Water had been sprinkled upon the mud floor, and across the upper end of the room was spread a felt cloth, of great thickness and value, and bright with the hue of all the colours of the rainbow. This and a large silk-covered pillow, which rested against the wall, formed the simple furniture of the room. In a few minutes my Persian servants had spread my bed, poised my basin upon its tripod stand, and placed with some ceremony upon the floor the few books that composed my library. These, the preliminaries of my taking up my abode, being duly settled and arranged, the chamber, with its brown mud walls and dilapidated windows, had soon a homely appearance for me.

About an hour had elapsed when the apparition of a handsome well-dressed Afghaun at the door warned me that the promised bath was ready. I was up in an instant, for I knew of old the comfort that an hour or so of parboiling and shampooing brought to aching bones and weary muscles. Outside in the little yard were grouped some four or five retainers of the young Chief. They were all armed to the teeth, and after the Afghaun had mar-

shalled them into order, it looked, when we all walked silently away together, as if we were bent on some desperate deed of blood, rather than for the peaceful purpose of a bath. We marched long with all due solemnity to that part of the citadel in which I was informed the young Chief's apartments and "anderoon"¹ were situated. Through dark passages, up crumbling steps, across little open terraces from which we looked up and caught a glimpse of lofty windowless walls, we made our way to the little honeycomb chambers that formed the "Hummaum" or bath of the Chief's dwelling. My attendants having here left me, I speedily surrendered myself to a tall gaunt man, who, stripped naked to the waist, was waiting for my arrival. In the space of a few minutes he had dressed me much in the same fashion in which he himself was clad. A gay-coloured cotton sheet was wound about my lower limbs, and then, being pulled tight at the waist, was fastened in the twinkling of an eye in a knot wonderfully firm and artistic. Another sheet was wrapped loosely but carefully about my head; and so accoutred, and shuffling over the tiled floor in wooden shoes, I accompanied my gaunt friend, who took me by the hand into a small inner chamber. In this chamber nothing was visible through the moist warm vapour that enveloped all things, save a round aperture in the dome-like roof above.

¹ Women's apartments.

An intense discomfort of a few minutes, during which a sense pervaded me that the blood of the whole body had suddenly rushed into and filled the veins of my head; a short and sharp battle with the powers of darkness and pungent soap; a feeling of utter and hopeless prostration amounting almost to faintness, quickly followed by a sensation that the languid life stealing back upon me was a dear treasure worth possessing—nay, more, a blessing to be humbly grateful for;—these things, one and all, satisfied me that the man, portions of whose gaunt frame I had every now and then fancied I had caught a glimpse of through the misty darkness of the bath, was an artist of no mean pretensions, and one who, though living in this obscure mountain fort, might rank among the best and most skilled “hummaumchees” of Isfahoon. During the delightful sense of comfort and repose that followed the bath, I trifled with some coffee, very black and very bitter, a kaileoon of indifferent tobacco, a huge water-melon, and a tray of sweetmeats. These last were snow-white and of all shapes. But the round ones, while they were the most palatable, were at the same time of a consistency so curious, that one could only break them by laying them flat in the palm of one hand, while you struck at them with the edge of another. In this way they broke at once like a biscuit. Any other attempt to break them, and they resolved themselves into something

the consistency of india-rubber, and then their motto was "frangas, non flectes."

The young Chief had told me that during my stay in his father's fort I was to consider myself entirely as his guest. Nothing in the way of food, either for my servants or horses, or for myself, was to be purchased. In the evening when I walked down to the spot where my horses had been picketed, I found them amply supplied with barley and chopped straw. My two Persian grooms were sitting on their heels, wearing all the appearance of men who had been well fed. Even the muleteers, who so frequently, by reason of their inscrutable whims, tend to embitter the life of a traveller in these countries, appeared for once in a way to be happy and contented, and wanting nothing. As the sun touched the rocky horizon that bounded the view on the west, I wended my way along the ramparts, back to my apartments, so as to meet the young Chief, who had promised to pay me a visit an hour before the "shaum," or evening meal.

He came attended by the old man who had accompanied him in the morning, and by several armed retainers. These took up their position along the wall of the terrace outside of the room, but the old man, whom I soon learned was called the "Oozeer," entered with Firamoorz, and took his seat beside him on the felt cloth. Firamoorz examined with great curiosity every single article of

European manufacture that I possessed, and with the greatest freedom asked all manner of questions regarding the use that was made of them. A few rough sketches in water-colours that were in my book pleased him much, and he insisted upon my making a picture of him shooting an antelope, with the least possible delay, that he might present the same to his father. I told him I would try next morning to make a picture of him such as he desired to have. The delay seemed to cause him great disappointment, for, pointing at my colour-box, which lay open before him, he said, that with the colours all ready as they appeared to be, he should have thought the picture might have been done at once. As it had happened in the morning, so it happened now, that the old man maintained a reserved silence, but every now and then I remarked he raised his overhanging penthouse brows, and I could see the somewhat sinister gleam of his eye as he stole an observant curious glance around the room. After half an hour's pleasant but somewhat boisterous conversation, Firamoorz withdrew, having previously arranged the hour at which I was to pay a visit of ceremony the next morning to his aged father. As they left, I observed the old Oozeer step off the felt carpet, and walk quickly to that end of the room where the window was which looked down into the moat below. From out of this window he cast a downward glance, and then, appa-

rently satisfied, he caught up the skirt of his long flowing cloak, and stepped briskly away after his young Chief.

For my evening repast several savoury dishes were brought to me straight from the "anderoon,"—roast and stewed lamb smothered in rice and raisins, various succulent vegetables cooked in oil, and some plates of baked and raw fruit. The exertions of the gaunt man in the bath had endowed me with so good an appetite that I did ample justice to the excellent dishes set before me. When I had finished, the many-coloured and well-stained tablecloth¹ was carried away by one of the servants of Firamoorz, but the large pieces of unleavened bread which had served both for plates and dishes, and all that remained upon them, were taken possession of by my two Persian servants, whose right hands never ceased their labours till every scrap had disappeared.

The previous night having been passed in the saddle, I retired to rest rather earlier than usual. My bed was spread upon the ground, and from the spot where I lay I could see the broken indented line of the wall that formed the farther parapet of the bastion, clearly and sharply defined against the starlit sky. Before I fell asleep I observed that the line of wall—and exactly that portion of it

¹ A well-stained soiled tablecloth is considered a token of the liberality and good cheer of the host.

which crossed my window—resembled the profile of an upturned face, and curiously enough, though on a somewhat gigantic scale, of a face remarkably regular and Grecian in its outline. And thus, having discovered the fancied resemblance to a human countenance that the top of the old ruined wall presented when thrown into black relief by the shades of night, I became so fascinated with the discovery, that long before I had fallen asleep I gazed and gazed through the darkness till the features engraved themselves upon my memory like those of some familiar, well-known, and well-remembered face. As I wandered away to the land of dreams, the clanging boom of kettledrums and the shrill notes of some instrument that sounded like those of a fife arose from some of the courtyards below, and then indistinctly I heard the martial sounds caught up by the night breeze and swept away to be the sport of distant mountain echoes.

How long I had slept I knew not, but about midnight, as I reckoned, I was awoke by the creaking of the one wooden shutter that half closed the aperture of that window of my room which looked out upon the terrace. The light wind eddying round the bastion caught the projecting shutter, and set it creaking on its osier hinges with such a grating doleful noise that once I had heard it I felt that sleep, tired though I was, was out of the ques-

tion till I had fastened the offending object in such a way that it would be impossible for it to offend any longer. I therefore at once rose for the purpose of securing it, but before doing so, I looked out upon the night. A waning moon that was just rising threw little or no light upon the scene around me. But the stars, set in the deep blue enamel of the heaven, were everywhere in their most brilliant array. Looking immediately about me, the massive walls of the fortress appeared dark, solid, and sombre against the midnight sky. From my two servants, who lay stretched like corpses flat upon the terrace, immediately outside the door of my room, my gaze wandered to the old ruined wall that bounded the *terre-plein* of the bastion. Then, as a matter of course, as I bethought me of the outline of the face that had so fascinated me as I fell asleep, I commenced to look for the, to me, well-known features so fancifully formed by the accidents of ruin and decay. But, strange to relate, I could see nowhere that for which I looked. No profile of a face, or anything resembling it, was visible. Do what I would, my eye seemed spontaneously ever to come back and rest upon a certain projection or rise which looked so black, still, and dark, that it appeared as if of a piece with the wall itself.

But in a few minutes, by dint of anxious and attentive observation, I satisfied myself that this

projection was the object that marred the fancied beauty of the profile that I had gazed upon as I fell asleep. For, separating it in my mind's eye from the wall, the features, such as I remembered them, became at once distinct and traceable as they had been before. This projection then was something new, a something on the wall or of the wall that had not existed during the early hours of the night. Of this I had not the least doubt. For when I recalled to mind and traced the features such as I had seen them the night before, I, as I have said, recognised them again, only just where the short upper lip of the profile had dipped into a graceful curve, there now uprose something—what, it was impossible to discern,—but something that looked as if of one piece with the wall, so black and motionless did it appear against the sky. Looking at it again and again, it seemed to me to assume the shape and dimensions of a hooded human figure. Once this impression had taken possession of me, it made me feel intensely uncomfortable, for I could not divest myself of the idea that from the seemingly immovable object above a pair of human eyes was fixed intent upon my movements. This supposed presence of a silent midnight watcher within a stone's throw of my couch so troubled and perturbed me, that I was determined I would satisfy myself whether or not I was right in my conjecture. I

therefore placed myself against the side of the window, so as to bring a star to touch the outline of the object. For I reasoned that if this thing above was "a thing of life," a movement of some kind or other would sooner or later betoken that, immovable and lifeless as it appeared, it was not a mere projection of the crumbling battlements of the wall, as it at the first glance seemed to be. In the position I had placed myself I knew that its slightest motion would become immediately apparent to the eye. How long I watched I know not, but second succeeded second, minute followed minute, and still so perfectly motionless and quiet did the dark object above remain that I began to think my sight had played me some trick, and that the fancied profile was merely the baseless fabric of some waking dream. Then again it was hard to make myself believe this, for the remainder of the features I could distinctly trace. As a last resource I bethought me that, standing up as I then was, my eyes being upon a different level, I saw that which had been invisible to me when lying down. But, by stooping, I brought my eyes to the same plane as that along which I looked when on my bed. In this position the human proportions of the object became, or seemed to become, more than ever apparent. As I felt that lying down to sleep was impossible while this strange thing was brooding above between me and

the starlight, I stepped out of the window, and, dropping into the terrace, I walked slowly across and straight up to the opposite wall, gazing intently through the gloom upon that which had so aroused my curiosity. When about half-way across, as if by magic the object disappeared. I fancied I heard the sounds of a quickly-retreating hurried step, and then all was silent and still again. I listened in vain for several minutes to catch some sound that might betray the further movements of this strange night-visitor. I heard nought save the hoot of an owl, whose sudden and piercing shriek, "making night hideous," sounded like the cry of some suffering wretch doomed to everlasting torture and perdition. As the top of the wall in its lowest places was some fifteen or eighteen feet high, I knew that any attempt to scale it from my side was out of the question. So I abandoned the idea of making an effort to scramble up—an idea I had momentarily entertained—for the purpose of seeing what standing-room, if any, existed on the other side, and so near the top of the wall that a person standing upon it would show the upper portion of the figure in the way that this strange and silent visitor had done. I therefore returned to my chamber and threw myself upon my couch, and though sleep came not for some time, I neither saw nor heard anything more to disturb me that night.

The next morning at the appointed hour I waited

upon the Chief of the Fort of F——. Though Firamoorz had not told me anything about his father, save that he was very aged and infirm, I no sooner saw him than I felt convinced that I was in the presence of one who had not many days to live. Propped up against the wall by large bundles of felt and silk-covered pillows, there sat, or rather reclined, a man upon whose worn and wasted features death was visibly and unmistakably stamped. Looking at those features, and at the dim lacklustre eyes that gazed vacantly into space, I could trace the resemblance that Firamoorz, who was present during the visit, bore to his father. The interview was to me a most painful one, for the aged Chief, racked as he appeared every now and then to be by the pains of death, was scarcely conscious of anything that was passing around him. Those attending upon the Chief asked me whether I had any medicines that would alleviate in any way the sufferings that were so evident and so distressing to witness. I knew that the few simple drugs I carried were powerless to cope with the ravages of the terrible disease which was rapidly taking the old Chief to his grave; so I was careful not to give any, and therewith raise false hopes.

It was during the still and quiet hour of noon, when I thought there would be the least probability of my being disturbed in my explorations,

that I had proposed to myself to enter the old ruined building that was opposite. I concluded that from its windows—the building evidently had two floors—I should be able to look into the courtyard, or whatever it was, that lay beyond the lofty and apparently fragile wall that bounded my terrace, for I was anxious to see what standing-room the mysterious visitor of the night had found so near the top of it. Scrambling up some old stone steps, which, though much worn, had evidently not been used for years, for cobwebs hung stretched above them, and the dust of ages that had accumulated everywhere rose at my every tread in little clouds of vapour, I found myself in the entrance of a large room from the windows of which I could look down into my courtyard and the one that was now visible adjacent to it. Great was my surprise to observe that, the level of the yards being the same, the wall was as lofty on this side as on my own. So that the person, or whatever it was, must have been standing some fifteen or sixteen feet above the level of the ground below. My next care was to see how this was practicable. I discovered that within three or four feet of the top of the crumbling wall there were the remains on this side of an ancient ramp that still afforded standing-room, though from its ruined state the space was both narrow and confined. The only thing that struck me was, that this ramp, with

no steps that I could discover leading up to it, must have been of difficult access to anybody ascending to it from the yard below. As I stood pondering within myself as to the intentions of the strange night-visitor that had evidently wished to escape my observation the night before, the solemn stillness that reigned amid these old ruined walls and rooms at this the noontide hour was suddenly broken by the noise of a fast approaching step. Curious to know who it was, I stood concealed behind the massive buttress of the window. What was my astonishment when the old Oozeer, entering from some door below me, strode into the yard. I watched him as he carefully examined the dividing wall with the ruined ramp, and then, as if apparently satisfied with his examination, he turned on his heel and left the yard by the same entrance as that by which he had approached. From the sound of his retreating step it was evident that he was leaving the building we were then in, in a direction opposite to that in which my abode lay. This reconnoitring, as it were, of the ground in my immediate neighbourhood by the old Oozeer at once set me a-thinking. Had this sinister-looking old man, whose appearance I had from the commencement disliked, any evil design against my life? When suddenly I had conceived this idea, my thoughts ran riot along the ways of murder and assassination. For a few moments,

as I bethought me of the remaining window of my room that hung high over the moat below, it struck me that if attacked at disadvantage in that room, escape would be impossible. But as suddenly as I conceived, so suddenly did I abandon the idea. For when I came to my sober senses I felt convinced that as long as I remained a guest of the Chief in whose fort I was then in, no one would dare to raise a finger against me. Then again, for a person to approach my room from the terrace wall could not be done, at least so far as I was aware, without their making a sheer drop of some fifteen or eighteen feet, and this was no likely manner for an assassin to approach when the much easier way by the door into the yard outside my room presented itself; for this door, though always closed at night from the inside in accordance with the wishes of Fira-moorz, given to me by himself, could only be made fast in a manner so temporary and insecure that any one wishing to enter could have opened it from the outside with but little noise or trouble. The supposition that any would-be assassin would fire into the window of my room on the chance of hitting me, I also dismissed from my mind, knowing that an Afghaun would rather trust to his knife to despatch his victim than to such an uncertainty as that presented by firing into the window of a dark room.

That my life was not the object seemed finally to me so conclusive from manifest reasons, that I felt not the slightest doubt on the subject. So I utterly banished from my mind the "thick-coming fancies" that for a few moments had oppressed me. As far as I could judge, it remained alone evident to me that in some way or other the visit of the old Oozeer which I had just witnessed, was connected with the mysterious apparition of the night previous. In what way it was so connected, I could not form the most slender surmise. What his object might have been in having come either in person, or in having sent some one to the top of the wall to watch me in the middle of the night, was more than I could divine. Thinking over the matter, I made the best of my way back, and then, what with coquetting with the calm-restoring "kaileoon," and sipping some delicious sherbet cooled with lumps of snow that had been sent me by Firamoorz, the hours passed peacefully and quietly away, till the sun, dipping towards distant rocky peaks, warned me that the time for the evening visit of the young Chief had approached. Shortly after the "azaun," or call to evening prayers, had sounded from the minarets of a small mosque below, the young Chief made his appearance at my door. He was in rather more than his usual buoyant spirits. He told me that he had been for the greater part of the day in pursuit of one of his father's clansmen, who having

refused to pay his annual tribute of goats and sheep, had disappeared with his flocks from the pastures rented by him. Firamoorz had this day caught him, but the capture had not been effected without a struggle, for Firamoorz told me with delight the manner in which, after the fight had lasted some time, he managed to plant his spear in the back of the absconder, and so, bringing him to the ground, had put an end to the conflict. It appeared then that the poor wretch had been tied to the saddle-bow of one of the victorious party, and so brought captive to the fort.

The young Chief had kept the ball of conversation rolling so rapidly and noisily that I had no opportunity of making my voice heard, even if I had wished to do so. At first I had thought of mentioning to Firamoorz the strange occurrence of the past night; but as the door of the room remained open, and some of his attendants were seated immediately outside listening to the conversation, and every now and then loudly expressing their approbation of their young master's prowess, it struck me that I could scarcely touch upon the subject without giving rise to suspicions that I was a prey to alarms for my own safety—suspicions which, remembering the hospitable treatment I had received, I was most anxious not to excite.

When darkness had set in, and my bed had been

spread in the same place that it had occupied the night before, I looked out from it into the gloom and there saw, crossing the open half of the window, the profile that had so fascinated me when I had first discovered it. In daylight it was not distinguishable, but now that the ruined wall was in deep black shadow, it became distinctly traceable between me and the starlit sky. As I scanned the features so curiously and delicately carved by the caprice of time and decay, I wondered within myself whether they would be again distorted by the same mysterious apparition that had so suddenly marred their to me fancied beauty during the past night. They were not so marred, nor was I destined again to see anything above them; but I have to record the occurrence of an event in the dead of the night of a nature to me at the time so strange and unaccountable, that it far surpassed what I had already witnessed. I never could remember exactly what it was that awoke me—whether it was some unwonted noise, or whether it was mere accident, that caused me suddenly to open my eyes, and fix them staring, and, as it were, wide awake upon that corner of my room which was immediately in front of me, and between the two windows. Through the open window, for there was no sort of shutter to it, that overhung the moat, there came a faint gleam of moonlight that fell aslant upon the floor, and threw

an uncertain light across and in front of that corner, upon the utter darkness of which my gaze was intently and involuntarily fastened. In that corner I could see nothing, nor could I hear anything. The deep stillness, and silence, and darkness of night was on all things; yet some sense, some instinct, warned me that the dark recess into which I was gazing was tenanted. A feeling that I was not alone in the room, a nervous dread of the presence of some unseen, unrealised thing, took such powerful hold of me that for a few seconds I felt I was powerless to exert any will of my own, or even to move the fixed gaze of my eyes from off the dark corner in front of them. At length, by a strong effort of the will, I roused myself into something that partook of a reasoning mood. I asked myself why, not having seen anything, or indeed heard anything, should this foolish idea have taken possession of me, that the room had another occupant besides myself? Why should I allow myself to entertain a vague horror of that which, at the most, had but a fancied existence in my excited imagination? And now that my sobered senses had partially resumed their sway, I felt almost inclined to laugh aloud at my folly, as I finally lowered my gaze, and allowed it to follow the faint light of the moonbeam that fell aslant upon the floor. But this inclination to laugh at what I had almost succeeded in making myself believe was my

own folly, was of the shortest possible duration, as the reader may suppose ; for no sooner had I looked on the floor than the light that faintly streamed through the window was suddenly broken by a shadow that seemed to fall upon it, as if something had been projected into the moon's ray from out of the black depth of the recess. Then after all I was right ! The room *had* another occupant besides myself ! Of this there could be no longer any doubt, for this shadow so suddenly thrown and now visible before me was no mere fanciful creation of the brain. On looking up, something—what, I had not time to discern—gleamed for an instant in the light, and then withdrew into the darkness. It is impossible for me to record with distinctness what guided my subsequent actions. I suppose it was the prompting of some desire of self-defence that caused me to spring from my bed and make my way across the room to the spot where my sabre hung suspended from the wall. To reach this down was the work of an instant, but I had to turn my back upon the window. As my fingers grasped the handle, something seemed to pass swiftly across the uncertain light of the moon, and the wooden casement of the window gave out a sound as if it had received a rude shock. I stood rooted to the ground like one bereft of his senses, and in a manner bewildered, not knowing what to do or what to think. My brow felt chill and damp.

And I was conscious of a feeling as if a piece of ice had been passed rapidly down my back, as the thought seized me that I had been in the presence of some supernatural being, for I conceived that nothing human could make an exit from that window hanging high over the moat below and live. Was this some ghost, some spirit that had thus flitted away from my mortal presence, prognosticating by its visit the approaching death of the old Chief which it had been evident to me was nigh at hand? As I asked myself this question I believe I almost smiled at my own credulity, for I remembered the shadow that the thing had thrown upon the floor. And ghosts, I reflected, at least real *bona fide* orthodox ghosts, should, like Peter Schlehnil, not be possessed of a shadow. Then I bethought me of the mysterious apparition of the night previous. That "ghost, if ghost it were," was possessed in like manner of too solid, opaque, and material a substance to admit for a moment of the belief that it partook of a solely spiritual nature. As I tried to comfort myself with these assurances, there still remained a lurking hard-to-be-denied suspicion in me that these old ruined and long tenantless rooms might be haunted, and that my occupation of them had disturbed the accustomed nightly visit of some ghostly thing or other. I tried to make my way to the window, but my step faltered and my limbs trembled beneath

me. Even the sudden gleam of the moon, reflecting itself from the polished surface of the sabre, as I finally reached the window, made me start back as if I had trodden on an adder. I peered out into the night and listened for some sound that might help me in divining what strange thing it was that had just effected its exit from the window. As I looked down into the gloomy depths below, the screech of the night owl—the same screech I thought that I had heard before—suddenly broke the stillness of the night. So strangely discordant and piercing were the tones of this shrieking bird that they seemed to rend and tear into shreds the still hush of the midnight hour. The very life-blood in my veins was chilled by the weird unearthly sounds, and I felt that peculiar creeping sensation which, acting through the nerves upon the skin, causes the feeling which the Italians I think designate by the name of "*pelle d'anatro*." So perturbed and puzzled were my thoughts that not till the cheerful "light of jocund day stood tiptoe on the rosy mountain-tops," did sleep come to me. Then I fell off into a troubled and dream-oppressed slumber, in which my brain was tortured with shapes not of this earth, which flitted like bats to and fro through the open window of my apartment.

The third and last day of my stay was occupied for the greater part in making preparations for my departure, which had been fixed for the morrow.

With the exception of the usual evening visit of Firamoorz, the day passed without any occurrence worthy of remark. As on former occasions, the young Chief came accompanied by the old Oozeer and a train of armed followers. He talked volubly, as was his wont, seldom or never pausing in his speech for either question or reply from me. He wore a handsomely-mounted Khorassannee scimitar, which in the course of conversation he drew from its scabbard for the purpose of showing me the blade. The metal of which this was made, displaying one of the most esteemed patterns of damascene, was evidently of fine temper. Carefully examining it, I found it possessed in the highest degree the three great excellences of the true Khorassan blade. Firstly, the hue of the ground, being of a grey colour—it may also be of a brown and of a black colour, and yet denote good steel—was decided and deep in its tint: secondly, the play of colour on the metal, when subjected to oblique light, was very beautiful. The tints most perceptible *then* were crimson and yellow, patches of the former colour touched at their edge with a golden hue, like red clouds bathed in the light of a setting sun. Thirdly, the figures or patterns—the damascene—were those most highly esteemed and admired by Orientals. Like written characters they spread themselves across the whole breadth of the blade, the lines in some places fantastically

curling till they ended in a point; in others, undulating in diverse directions, they crossed and intersected each other, forming elaborate network on the blade. Firamoorz said that no weapon that he had ever seen could be compared to it in firmness and keenness of edge. The sword had been, he told me, for many generations an heirloom in the family, and he recounted with evident pride the doughty deeds of his ancestors when wielding the costly and well-tempered weapon.

That evening, the last of my visit, I remained sleepless for many hours after throwing myself upon my bed. My mind was occupied in revolving the strange occurrences of the two past nights. The more I reflected the more puzzled and mystified did I become. With the spectral apparition—for I had almost begun to look upon it as such—I could in no way connect the bodily presence of the old Oozeer. For it was his visit to the ruined building adjacent, of which I had been a silent witness, that had made me suspect he was in some way or other connected with the silent midnight watcher that had attracted my attention during the first night. But on the occurrence of the following night I could form no sort of conjecture whatever. It was preposterous to suppose that a man well stricken in years, as he was, could have attempted, much less succeeded, in making an exit from the window situated as mine

was. And that the Thing, whatever it was, had made its egress from that window I felt convinced. Besides, what object could he have had in visiting thus stealthily, and by night, the chamber occupied by me? The idea that he had come for the purpose and with the design of taking anything from me by stealth, I could not for a moment entertain. For, in the first place, there was nothing that I had that he would be likely to covet; and in the second, such conduct on his part would have been a breach of those laws of hospitality which an Afghaun, in his position, would be the last to hold in light esteem. Looking at the matter in every light that occurred to me, I was utterly unable to arrive at any satisfactory solution of that, which was in so bewildering a degree puzzling and mystifying me. And thinking over, in its minutest details, all that I had seen, I began, as the silent hours of night went by, to entertain a sort of dread presentiment that I was destined again to witness something on this the last night of my stay that would startle and appal me. Such a fixed idea in my brain did this become that it finally brought a sort of fascination with it—a feeling of dread expectancy that quite banished all desire and inclination for sleep. I was now determined that I would keep awake throughout the night, in order that if by chance anything should approach I would, being on the alert, in

all probability be able to form some sort of conjecture as to its nature and design. Restless and disturbed in consequence of the feeling that had gradually come over me, I could remain no longer in my bed. I therefore arose and seated myself in observation behind the window that looked into the terrace. Though in this position I was entirely concealed from the view of any one approaching by the terrace, I could see into it as far as the darkness of the night permitted. And I could also see the window which, if my visitor of the night previous did not partake of a supernatural or ghostly character, must, I concluded, have means of access to it of which I was entirely ignorant.

From the position of the constellation of Orion I judged that it was close upon midnight when I took my seat by the window. The moon had not yet risen, so that the terrace beneath was in pitchy darkness, save in one spot. Here the remains of a fire which the servants had built up with sticks and straw under the wall still glowed and flickered as every now and then a breath of the night wind blew it into life. I had not been in my post of observation long when a large rat scampered up to within the space lighted by the embers. He approached them cautiously, and when apparently satisfied, after solemn scrutiny, that there was no immediate danger to be apprehended, he commenced to eat voraciously the crumbs and relics

that remained on the ground from the evening meal. These disposed of, he concentrated an attack of teeth and claws upon a half-burnt candle that had been left by the servants. I was watching his every movement with intense interest when the surrounding stillness was scattered by a sudden noise. It seemed to come from the other side of the wall of the terrace, and was as that of a person on the move, but of one who rather ran than walked, for it was no measured tread, in that the footfall was not distinguishable. The sounds ceased, and then all was again still. It was no mere fancy my having heard the sounds, for I observed that the rat suddenly ceased his nibbling and stared at the wall, as if he expected that it was about to open and something emerge from it. The sounds from the farther side ceasing, my friend the rat commenced at the candle again, as if assured by the silence which had ensued that there was no immediate danger to be apprehended. But the silence was not of long duration, for after only a few minutes it was broken by the noise as if of some heavy body dropping into the terrace, and upon *my* side of the wall. Of this, from the sound, there was not the least doubt. Then followed the noise of the shuffling quick movements that I had heard before. That something was approaching was evident. For the rat jerked his head in the direction of the noise, sharply whisked his tail

in the other, and then incontinently vanished. I peered into the darkness, endeavouring in vain to discern what it was that was moving on the terrace. But nothing was visible for a few seconds. Then, as the sounds approached the fire, I saw gliding forth from the gloom into the light a tall, draped, and phantom-shaped thing. It resembled in such a startling manner that which had almost pictured itself in my imagination as the thing that I was destined to see, that I felt appalled and horror-struck, thinking that the figure was nothing more or less than a "sheeted ghost." I thought I would hail it, but my tongue clave to my mouth, and I felt utterly unable to speak or move. As it approached the embers a tongue of flame leapt upwards from the outlying fragments of stick and straw, and, flickering for a moment in the night breeze, threw a sudden gleam around. Noticing this, it was with a shuddering recollection I remembered the lone creature from the wood, in Coleridge's 'Christabel,' at whose weird presence the dying embers in the old ancestral hall burst into flame, and the dogs howled as in abject dread. An indescribable horror of the mysterious apparition that was now within a few feet of where I was concealed, crept over me. Yet, feeling this horror with the greatest intensity, I had no inclination to take my eye away from the dreaded object, for now its every movement had a strange fascina-

tion for me. What was my astonishment to see it, as it approached the fire, stoop down and put forth a long, lean, nervous hand to clutch the candle! This was held over the embers, and then above them, and, lighted by their glow, I saw what looked to me like the pale distended cheeks of a human face—distended with the act of blowing. The candle suddenly flared into flame, and I then saw—but, gracious heavens! how shall my poor pen convey an idea of the strange being that was now seating itself by the fire? The face, illumined by the fitful glare of the candle, was evidently that of a woman, but the features were so sharply defined, there were such strange hard lines about the mouth and brow, that there was nothing soft or womanly in its expression. And then there was a look in the eyes which was terrible—large, prominent, and reflecting the glow of the embers, they seemed to be lit by the fire that you see in those of a wild animal. They rolled incessantly in their sockets, except when every now and then the strange creature, apparently listening attentively, turned them with a fixed stare full upon the window behind which I was ensconced, as if she were trying to pierce the gloom of the chamber. Then, as the brows contracted, and as the white of the eyes grew painfully visible, there was something dreadful in her aspect. It was a frenzied concentration of baffled hate, revenge, and de-

spair; and as I looked upon the ghastly paleness of the face, relieved by the black mass of dishevelled hair falling on one shoulder, it seemed as if a portrait as terrible as that of Leonardo da Vinci's 'Medusa' had framed itself in the immeasurable gloom of night in front of me. As she seated herself by the fire, the loose white drapery which had enveloped her person had fallen not ungracefully around her. Her arms, stretched out towards the heat of the embers, were long and sinewy, and the muscles resembled, in their hard wiry look, more those of one of the species of the large quadrumana than those of a human being. Looking at them and her lithe quick movements, it was evident that she was possessed of amazing agility and physical strength. My eye took in these details patiently enough when once, after the first momentary glance, I had assured myself that this nightly visitor of mine was a human being, and not some phantom from another world. But her strange—and at times incoherent—gestures, and the wild, restless look in her eyes, had convinced me that she was a maniac. The melancholy state of the poor creature's mind was only too clearly and too painfully manifest. As from her attentive listening, with head bent in the direction of my room, I was sure that she did not wish to attract my attention or be seen by me, I remained perfectly still. She had remained some minutes seated, when the candle, which she had

fixed cleverly enough on end upon the terrace, seemed to rivet her attention. She was evidently pleased at the light that it gave, for a satisfied look passed across her features as she watched the flame bend hither and thither in the night wind. Suddenly she rose and sped swiftly away to the door that led into the terrace. I at first fancied that she was gone, for I heard her undo the fastenings of the door on the inside. But this was no sooner done than she made good her way to the spot where my baggage had been placed. She turned over several of the articles, and then came back to the fire with swift stealthy tread. I observed that she had brought with her three candles—the last in my possession—and lighting these, she appeared to have filled the measure of her contentment. A low satisfied laugh came from her half-closed lips, the evil expression of her features vanished, and there came upon them a gleam of forlorn beauty. Now that I could see her well, and in this mood, her likeness to Firamoorz struck me forcibly—the same handsome cast of features, and the same bold fearless look that his features bore at all times. She amused herself in childishly lighting and relighting the candles, and then, secreting them one and all about her person, she rose as suddenly as she had done before. She stayed a second or two listening attentively whether anything was moving in my chamber,

and then apparently satisfied, she flitted away in the direction of the door at the foot of the old ruined building. As I listened to her receding steps, as she strode through the deserted, ruined passages, I heard the piercing shrieking wail which I now knew only too well. I now knew it to be her voice, the voice of this poor night-wandering maniac, and not the cry of the owl, that thus rent the still midnight air.

It was while riding down the gorge with Firamoorz—for he only, attended by a few of his retainers, had accompanied me—that I determined to broach the subject that was on my mind. I felt extremely unwilling to go away without making an effort to learn something of the history of the strange being whose nightly visits had so perplexed me. But feeling sure, from her likeness to Firamoorz, that she was some near relation of his own, I knew, he being an Afghaun, that in making any direct inquiry about her I should be treading on delicate ground. So having pondered in my own mind that it would be desirable to await a favourable opportunity before I mentioned to him what I had been a witness of, or asked him any questions with reference to it, I talked to him on various subjects. As it turned out, an opportunity happened sooner than I had expected; for, in the course of conversation, he, in his usual brusque

way, asked me how I had slept during the three nights that I had been his father's guest. I related to him how I had been disturbed, and also what I had seen. I observed that in the course of my relation of the matter he was anxious, before answering any of my queries, to inform himself of all that I had been a witness of. Once informed by me to the full extent on this, he seemed to wish to have nothing further to conceal from me, and answered all my questions in his usual frank manner. Indeed he did more, for he recounted to me the history of the poor creature whose wanderings by night had caused her to be seen by me. She was his only sister, but older than himself by several years. Her first husband, a cousin and her playmate in childhood, and to whom she was fondly attached, had been killed while yet a youth, and only a few months after their betrothal, in a foray with a rebellious tribe on the frontiers of Persia. She was then given in marriage by her father to the Oozeer. It was shortly subsequent to this marriage that her reason became impaired. And though Firamoorz did not assign any cause for this, I inferred from the few words that he said on this particular part of her history that it had been owing, in a great measure, to the Oozeer's cruel treatment of her. His extreme jealousy, and his cruel, savage disposition, which I had observed stamped with an unmistakable expression upon

his features, had induced him to adopt measures for her confinement and seclusion more stringent than those allowed and sanctioned by Mohammedan law even to the lord of the harem. She was maintained in so strict a solitude by him, that not even one of her own sex was ever allowed to approach her. But as time grew on, her reason began to fail her. And then she would brook no confinement or imprisonment at his hands. She had made her escape from every place that the ingenuity of the Oozeer had provided for her seclusion. At last, but reluctantly, he gave it up in despair as a hopeless task. For the last few years she had been allowed perfect liberty of action; but having once exerted the whole force of her shaken reason in devising means of escape, and having invariably succeeded, her pleasure and custom now were to scale the lofty walls of the keep, and to make her way over its ruined and crumbling battlements, by paths where no human foot dared follow her. She was never to be seen by daylight; but after dusk she was always on the move, and her wild shrieking wail would be wafted through the still air of night from the dizzy heights of the keep, deemed inaccessible by the sirbauz on guard, who listened in awe to her piercing cries. They had invested her with supernatural powers, and never dared look at her if she passed near their beat. The old Oozeer, fearing that I should either hear or

see her, if I came to the Fort, had, Firamoorz told me, wished to prevent my paying a visit to the Chief his father. But when he found that he could not prevent my visit, on account of several reasons connected with my appointed duties there, he had been careful to have me placed in a part of the citadel which he fancied, from its position, to be inaccessible even to her. And it was on this account that he had desired Firamoorz to enjoin my keeping shut the door of the terrace, so as to leave her no access, as he supposed, to the rooms occupied by me and my servants.

When I expressed my astonishment that she should have so persistently visited my abode every night, Firamoorz explained that her only object, as he supposed, must have been to possess herself of the candles. She must have observed one of these burning the first night of my stay, and never having seen one before, her desire had been to take one away for her own amusement without being seen by anybody. The first two nights my being on the alert, as she was cautiously making her way to the terrace, had driven her forth, only to return the third night, when she imagined she was not being watched by me. He was much astonished when I related her sudden escape through the window over the moat. He was aware, he said, that a ledge ran round the bastion beneath the window, which widened as it approached the main

wall of the keep; but neither he nor the old Oozeer had ever deemed it possible that she would attempt to make her way along it. That she must have done so had been only too evident to me; and he could only assume that the way was familiar to her, and that from long use she had been able to take advantage of the inequalities in the ruined face of the bastion as she made her perilous way around it.

By the time that Firamoorz had satisfied my curiosity on all points connected with the strange and eventful history that he had, apparently without reserve, recounted to me, we had left the gorge, and had advanced some distance into the plain below. Here he took leave of me, and wishing that God would ever be my protector, he clapped spurs to his horse, and dashed away across the plain, followed by his retainers. I jogged on my way, seeing ever before me the ghastly face and the wild eyes of the night-wanderer that haunted me for many a day like a terrible and fearful vision.

AYRSHIRE CURLING SONG.

BY THE LATE DR NORMAN MACLEOD.

[MAGA. FEBRUARY 1867.]

Air—"Come under my plaidie."

A' NICHT it was freezan', a' nicht I was sneezan',
"Tak' care," quo' the wyfie, "gudeman, o' yer cough."
A fig for the sneezan' ! hurrah for the freezan' !
This day we're to play the Bonspiel on the loch !
Then get up, my auld leddy, the breakfast get ready,
For the sun on the snaw-drift's beginning to blink ;
Gie me bannocks or brochan, I'm aff for the lochan,
To mak' the stanes flee to the tee o' the rink !

Chorus.

Then hurrah for the curling frae Girvan to Stirling !
Hurrah for the lads o' the besom and stane !—
"Ready noo !" "soop it up !" "clap a guard !" "
"steady noo !" "
Oh ! curling aboon every game stan's alane !

The ice it is splendid, it canna be mended—
Like a glass ye may glowr on't and shave aff yer beard :
And see hoo they gather, coming ower the brown heather
The servant and master, the tenant and laird !
There's brave Jamie Fairlie, he's there late and early,
Better curlers than him or Tam Conn canna be,

Wi' the lads frae Kilwinning, they'll send the stanes
spinnan,

Wi' a *whirr* and a *curr* till they sit roun' the tee.

Then hurrah ! &c.

It's an uncolike story that baith Whig and Tory
Maun aye collyshangy like dogs ower a bane ;
And a' denominations are wantin' in patience
For nae Kirk will thole to let ithers alane ;
But in fine frosty weather let a' meet thegither,
Wi' a broom in their haun' and a stane by the tee,
And then, by my certes, ye'll see hoo a' parties,
Like brithers will love, and like brithers agree !

Then hurrah ! &c.

[Curling and golf, we must inform our southern readers who are ignorant of these grand northern sports, are the only public games—and perhaps we might add bowls—in which the Scotch clergy of all denominations, and from time immemorial, indulge. Some of the best and keenest curlers are furnished by the Kirk, who join in the sport without any thought or question regarding the creed of their fellow-sportsmen. Even their morals, if so-so during summer, would receive as charitable interpretation as possible, if in winter, and on the ice, they proved themselves to be steady, straightforward, genial, and, above all, victorious curlers. There is a story told of an old minister, who, after service, said to his congregation—"My brethren, there's no more harm in saying it than in thinking it : if the frost holds, I'll be on the ice to-morrow morning at nine."]

TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD."

THE LIGHT ON THE HEARTH.

BY THE LATE COLONEL CHARLES HAMLEY.

[*MAGA.* SEPT.—NOV. 1858.]

CHAPTER I.

THE Christmas-tree had been stripped of its fruit, nought save the unlit ends of tapers hung now amid its branches; the twelfth-cake lay on the plate a bare and mutilated torso; the patter of little feet had ceased; the merry ring of laughing voices had died away, and the dancing forms had vanished; but the echoes of the voices still resounded in my ears, soft and wordless as fairy music or the murmuring of summer winds; and the young forms floated around, fleecy and changeful like cloud-shapes, bearing only a spirit likeness to the things of earth. Anon there came amid these

shadows of shades apparitions, as it were, in this spirit-world ; other faces and forms—the faces and forms known long, long ago, as the beings of our childhood—the images of old friends and companions, some long since passed away, others never since seen ; and these seemed not as if they were regenerated or renewed likenesses of the men and women who had passed back into semblances of youth, but as if they had been the angels and spirits of their childhood which had stayed on the world's threshold, playing and floating still in the rosy blushing lights of life's dawn, and had never passed through the fire, or known trial, or suffering, or care. As these grew and gathered, my spirit went forth in the midst, and became as one of them. The scars and furrows, the weather-beat time-marks, were not only smoothed and softened, but obliterated wholly, and the memories of many a dark day and stern strife went out as things which had never been. I dared not look up at the glass, lest the real lines and care-stamps should bear me back to the world again.

Thus there dawned upon me, like the breaking of a morn, a vision of my youth. It was not a dream—it was too distinct for that ; nor was it a memory, for there were the lights and the brightness, without the shadows or the dark spots of reality.

Once more youth came upon me—once more the

world was glorified to my sight—once more the veins beat fully, and the heart-pulses throbbed with the romance and poetry which are to the acted history, or to the written poems of life, as the pure, white, falling snowflake is to those which have dabbled in earth, and been streaked with clay—once more I stood in corduroys and bell-buttons, with a stiff rasping frill round my neck, and rejoiced therein; for the spirit in such visions ever recognises a consistency in externals and stage properties, and adopts them intuitively, however repellent they be to its realities.

The old faiths, the old reverences, returned once more—the old beliefs, the old interpretations and revelations, which are not, as some would say, cheats and illusions, but the shadows of better things—the shadows of Eden days and Eden being—and the soul of the boy came again as the flesh of a cleansed leper. Once more there were pictures in the clouds, angels in the sunbeams, poems in flowers and trees, haloes round men, beatitudes floating over women. Even the grotesqueness of childhood—the strange thoughts, fancies, and misapprehensions which blend with its visions and illusions, as the rough shapes and forms do in Gothic architecture with floral ornaments and chiselled beauty—had no unfitness. The memory of the many mistakes and blunders which had confounded and burlesqued great things, sacred and

profane, brought back no sense of shame. It was no mortification to remember how, in promising to renounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, there had always been present a confused belief that I thereby abjured oyster-patties, jam puffs, and other kickshaws, which were always named by these denominations in the paternal speech. Nor did the cheek tingle at the thought of the reverence with which the externals of justice had once been regarded, or at the recollection of the awe with which ermine, wigs, and scarlet impressed me, as they were paraded in stately show along the church aisles ; or of the fear which came upon me, like a deadly damp, when, having piled hassock on hassock to look on the show, the treacherous pedestal gave way, and I fell with a loud bump to the ground, and there lay speechless and powerless, expecting every moment to be haled forth by some stern javelin-man, placed before the awful presence, and there and then judged to condign punishment. Even the realisations of commonplace women and false friends did not disturb the confidence of boyish admiration and boyish love. All these sprang back again fresh and strong as ever.

Once more youth came upon me, and with it the old scenes and associations. Out from these one stood vividly and brightly. It was a scene connected with one of those episodes which make

the history of a life, which tone, and colour, and character it. It was the birthplace of a feeling and an interest, which ran afterward through the whole being, not apparently ruling or affecting its destiny, yet really leading and directing it by the good, holy influences it had created. Cannot every man detect, in his past, some such clue, which, though unseen and unknown by the many, to himself unravels all the puzzle and mystery of his destiny? The boy of other days, ignoring the man that was and had been, I stood once again in the place and time, which memory had conjured up, identified by ungainliness and fervour; by bashfulness and wild aspirations; by small cares and large hopes; quick joys and short sorrows; by the petty agitations of marbles and prison-base, and deep, rough, unhewn thoughts of romance and chivalry; by greased jackets and torn corduroys; by dog-eared books and cracked slate; and again the heart caught up the little history which had begun and ended there in its outward action, and pursued it, stage by stage, in its advances and consummation.

. The spot was one which we boys of the grammar-school had seized upon as an extra or supplementary playground, and though many vested authorities strove to interfere with our settlement, we held our own, as squatters generally do. It was at the meeting of four roads. At the junction

there was a row of trees, with the stumps of felled brethren standing at intervals, on which were placed the books and slates, and along it were marked pits and rings for our games at marbles. In an angle of the road was the churchyard, with its fine old massive church, its old schoolroom, an old ruined fragment of a priory, covered and almost hidden by masses of clustering ivy, and its grassy graves and old quaint tombstones. At this point, the lane, which had led along the school-gates, and by stable-doors, suddenly widened into a broad open space, and this was selected as the arena for the sports which required most room, such as, "smack smugglers," and "nip-ball-stick," a sort of degenerate hockey. Here, too, the fights came off; and here, too, was the scene of a grand *mêlée* which took place betwixt our school and the town boys. Challenges had passed frequently to and fro; chance combats were constantly taking place when any two of the rival sets happened to meet; and at last it was determined that the quarrel should be decided by a general engagement. We were marshalled by our leaders, who were in the Greek class, in the form of a phalanx, with the champions at the salient points, and thus marched down to the field of battle. It was our conceit that we were thus giving the correct classic touch to our warfare, though the shades of old Greek captains would have smiled grimly could they

have looked on the wavering of the flanks, and on the puny stripling forms which made the mass of the combatants. Down we went in most imposing form, slow and silent, all incipient cheers and cries being checked at once by a look from the chiefs. Our opponents were the reverse of classic in their array. Clamour, tumult, independence of throat and action, characterised their rabble rout. They were all stripped to their shirts, were bare-headed, had handkerchiefs or bands braced round their waists, and some of them were rolling earth or grass betwixt their palms and fingers, under the idea that this gave greater tenacity to the clench of the fist. They, like ourselves, had their champions, who stood in front swaying their bared arms, and shouting out challenges for some one from our ranks to come out and exchange a blow. The most vociferous of these was the son of a small farmer, a big uncouth fellow, bulky and large-limbed, but awkward and ungainly, shuffling in his movements, and loose in his strength. As this Goliath vaunted and defied us, the phalanx advanced, and our captain, who was at the apex, stood face to face with him. Shorter and less bulky than his antagonist, he was more compact, more firmly knit, more sinewy, and more elastic; and the round smooth face, ruddy and glowing, shaded by short dark curls, and the bright brown eye, usually laughing and gladsome, but now look-

ing forth calm and steady, were a contrast to the coarse massive features which now grinned and scowled defiance at him. Blows were exchanged and parried, and the fight was begun. As the phalanx swayed onwards, the town boys swarmed round, and it broke out in all parts. There was one lad, the champion of the junior classes and smaller boys—a daring reckless fellow, all dash and spring—to whom fighting was mirth and pastime, and ever and anon he would spring out on some foe, bound round in a series of attacks, finish the combat in a few rounds, or leave it unfinished, dashing on in the *mêlée*, giving a black eye here, a bloody nose there, knocking out the tooth of one, or tripping up the heels of another, and ever accompanying his blows with gibe and taunt after the Homeric fashion, but rather more in the Swiveller style as to elocution. Thus the fight went on for an hour or more. Our foes were hard, lusty, and plucky; but blood and bone and compactness began at last to tell. Our tactics were not to advance beyond our own line. Against this front the town boys still advanced, but every time with more clamour and less effect, and every time the tide of attack ebbed backwards. Their champion, with two black eyes and a crippled hand, was less eager for the onslaught, and at last the whole retreated, still shouting, and challenging us to follow; but we rested content with that

acknowledged proof of vantage—the possession of the battle-field. Then we began to count our wounded and our hurts. As usual, the small fry had suffered most, whilst the champions carried off the glory. There was many a blubber lip, swollen face, and bruised knuckle among us; and many a curled darling looked less lovely in his mother's eyes for many days; but there was peace betwixt the factions for a long time after.

When this arena was too limited for our operations, we used to make incursions into the churchyard, to carry on our games of hide-and-seek, or hunt-the-stag, spite of the opposition of the sexton. With this functionary we were at open war—always on principle trampling down the fences by which he used to try to stop our right of way, or turn favourite spots into particular sanctuaries; even on occasion making guerilla attacks by stamping down the loose newly-dug earth, shouting out his nickname in sepulchral tones from behind the buttresses of the schoolhouse, or pelting him with turfs as he stood up to his shoulders in the graves. Sometimes when an urchin was caught *in flagrante delicto*, he would take summary vengeance by turning him over his knee, and inflicting chastisement with the flat of his spade. At those who kept at arm's-length he would hurl a quaint biting gibe, which would turn the laugh even of their comrades against them. A madcap, harum-scarum

lad, who was always plaguing and aggravating him, once said, as he was laying the turf on a grave, "Well, Will, don't you wish it was me you were packing the sod upon?" "Thee!" said the old fellow, turning round and leaning on his spade; "we don't have thee sort here; they'em buried up at the gallows'-plot, with a stake druve through 'em." He was short, thick-set, hard, and weather-beaten, with a look half-sardonic, half-humorous, according to the temper of the moment, and a face marked with deep dark lines, like the scores on a gridiron. He rejoiced, too, in the cognomen of Beelzebub. The name was not personal, but patronymic, belonging to him and his. He was a character withal, and had his joke and his saying for all times and all people; could cant or swear, pray or drink, be saint or sinner, Brianite or churchman, as the time served.

Beyond our bounds, though within reach of the noise and hubbub of our sports, stood, a little removed from the road, a square brick-house, surrounded by a high wall, hiding all save the upper windows. The opening of the gate, too, was closed with latticed-work surmounted by a row of spikes, so that everything which met the eye of passers-by was cold, hard, and formal. A stray bough of laurel escaping over the wall, or a spray of ivy peeping above the line of enclosure, alone gave signs of the verdure which was said to luxuriate within. Here

lived Roger Trevenna, gentleman. The habitation was suited to the man. Tall, dark, and sombre, his exterior was forbidding enough ; yet the figure, though spare and sinewy, was straight and well-knit ; and the face would have been handsome, save for the expression of gloom and coldness which lay upon it, and which seemed to have been inlaid by constant pressure, not stamped in by sudden grief, or pain, or conscience. The expression had not the coldness of marble, but the dark, harder fixedness of bronze. The features were of the Norman type, large, and finely cut, the brow lofty and smooth ; but it was the smoothness of dark waters which the sun cannot lighten and the wind cannot stir. The hair was straight, and of the jet-black hue which defies time, care, or climate, to touch it with grey. He had left his native place in early youth—had come back a more than middle-aged man. A brother had gone with him—he returned alone. Of his intermediate life little was known. It was generally supposed that he had been a planter in the West Indies, had known vicissitudes, and endured deep trouble. None of his kith or kin were left to welcome him home. The house where he was born, and where his forefathers had lived for generations, was empty ; he bought it, and there abode with his wife, a gentle lady, meek and reserved, unknown to, and unknowing, those amid whom she was thus placed ; gracious and charit-

able, yet joyless, she reflected, in her mild pensiveness, her husband's temperament, as a woman's does the man's. Trevenna had little communion with those around him. There was little sympathy betwixt them; absence had made him almost a stranger—a stranger in feeling, thought, and habit. Many of his old comrades and playmates were still living, but they had gone on in the old beaten track: he had swerved far and widely from it, and 'twas hard, after so long a time, to take up the broken threads, to unite the ends of life. The interests, the topics, the pursuits, were strange; even the traditions were of a past time, and had not been moulded into the present by constant association and repetition. He tried to resume the old sporting tastes, but the effort was not genial, and brought him no nearer to his kind. Such a character was not likely to be popular. The gentles exchanged courtesies with him formally, and with a sort of constraint; the poor received his gifts, and gave cold thanks in return; the middle classes accorded him the respect due to one who was liberal in his living, and paid his way; but there existed not with any that cordial, hearty, half-familiar intercourse, which, in those days, was a charter of brotherhood betwixt the orders of men. The originals, and they were many, passed a general vote of censure on one who did not recognise their privileges in salutation or joke. The old sexton

declared that he cast a shadow even on the graves ; and his crony, the kennel-keeper, avowed that “ the dogs yowled as he passed by.” He was no favourite with us, either ; he would sometimes stop to look on our sports, but never smiled, and seldom spoke ; some said he sneered, though that was never well accredited. Thus he and his lived on in their quiet home, which, though it might be joyless, none dared say was an unhappy one. It was childless, however ; again and again there had been hopes that the light of childhood might shine upon it ; and as often as these were blighted, the gloom deepened, and grew more settled on the brow of man and wife.

There were some members of the establishment, however, in which we took a particular interest, and which, from their novelty, had a peculiar attraction. The one was a bloodhound, called Domingo, a noble fellow, deep-chested, thin-flanked, with a black muzzle and throat, and an eye sullen and threatening. Many were our attempts at fraternisation with him ; but the most gifted dog-tamers among us—those to whom pointers and spaniels did abject homage, and at whose feet curs grovelled in the dust—could gain no greater recognition of their power than a cold rub of the nose, or a slight wave of the tail. He never gambolled or frisked, and his growl or bay made the boldest keep back. Old Pepperpot the mule was another,

a vicious obstinate brute with a stumpy tail, which stood out like a pump-handle, or was flourished about like a shillelagh. It was considered, however, a great feat to get a mount on him either by favour or stealth, though the result was ever a kick or a tumble. With the third, a negro servant, we were more successful. He was a godsend—a treasure—an olla of oddity and fun—an ever-acting burlesque—a living jest-book—an extempore pantomime—a standing caricature—a comic interlude. His grotesqueness—his originality—his face, speech, and movement, were to us raciest touches of comicality. We laughed at him, and laughed with him; we quoted him; we pelted, bullied, and treated him. He was our butt—our low comedy—our prime storyteller—our oracle in many things. He rejoiced in the magniloquent names of Augustus Pierrepont Montmorenci. A very common quiz with the godfathers, who became surety for these black waifs and strays, was to label them with some high-sounding appellation, and thus fix on them the ridicule of a grand nomenclature. This was his titular name, and one that he repeated with great effect whenever put on his dignity; but he was commonly known among his familiars as "Quamino." Whether this was a patronymic or a sobriquet none knew, though he would always answer to it when in good temper; but woe to the youngster who ventured to use it without prefixing the

Mister, for all the wrath of injured dignity would then descend in a torrent on his head. It was our great delight to entice him into our sports, and witness all his antics—his attitude when attempting to catch a ball, mouth wide open, eyes staring, hands all abroad, and legs bent into a graceful curve—or his position when tempted into a sparring match with the boxing-gloves—the flourish of the arm, the goggle of his eyes when a feint was made, his horror if blood was drawn, and the look of rage and fury with which, after being hit hard, he would rush on, yelling out now, “I maash your cocoa-nut, Massa Harry.” It must be confessed that an unfair advantage was taken of the discovery which revealed his seat of sensitiveness, and that ever after, balls, marbles, sticks, seemed to have a natural affinity for his shins; and even snowballs were aimed in that quarter, and parts of them would stick on the shin, flecking its blackness like almonds on a pudding. There were, however, reciprocities in the alliance, and we used to atone by many a treat for all the tricks we put on him. Great part of our pocket-money went in supplying him with taffey or sugar, rum, and “baccy”—his three great weaknesses. When propitiated by these offerings, he would admit us on wet days into the stable, and there and then tell us stories by the hour, sing nigger songs, dance nigger dances, and astonish us with tropic descriptions, which were

marvellous to us as Arabian Night scenes, or the Adventures of Crusoe.

He had his cronies, had Mister Quamino, and the old sexton was one of the chief; yet they seldom met without a titling-match, and we generally managed to be present at the encounter. The morning salutation came off mostly somewhat after this manner:—

"Well, Massa Beelzebuub, how you do this morning? You berry busy. You plant plenty people this week? Me tink they not grow much after your planting—hi!"

"Who be you calling Beelzebub, I should like to know?" returned the old sexton; "I think you're a deal more like 'un, with yer black carcass, and yer shiny eyes, and yer hair like a singed cat's back."

"He! me daresay, Massa Will, you know berry well what him like. P'rhaps you see him berry often. He great friend of yours, eh? Dis bad place for you, Massa Sexton; too healthy great deal. You go to de West Ingies, dere Yellow Jack grab hundreds of dem black niggers in one night, and you plant 'em all in one great pit. You berry happy then, Massa Will."

"It seemeth to me, Mister Quamino, that this Yellow Jack must be very queer disease. How is it that it always taketh the best, and leaves the refuse?"

"Where you hear that? why you tink so, Massa Beelzebuub?"

"'Case," retorted his crony, "thee and thee maister was never tuk, and that's why I think so." Having thus broken his spear fairly, the old sexton would turn on his heel and resume his work.

Quamino, too, had his antipathies. The greatest of these was a retired tradesman, who had set up as gentleman, and affected to look with great disdain on "that black fellow," who in turn would never accord him the slightest sign of respect or deference, and lost no chance of throwing a sarcasm indirectly at him.

One day as he was driving home old Pepperpot, and had stopped to talk with us, the *norus homo* passed by, and, with a severe moral tone, said, "I wonder, young gentlemen, you can submit to such familiarities with a low black fellow like that!" Quamino answered not, but moved on, giving old Pepperpot at the same time two or three whacks, to which he responded in the usual style with kicks and snorts and flourishes of the tail. "Hi! hi!" said he, pretending to address the mule, "you berry proud, me tink, this morning, Massa Pepperpot. You forget, me tink, your fader were a jack-ass, hi!" and at the same time he goggled his great eyes at us, and gave the low guttural laugh of the nigger, like the rolling of pebbles set to music.

Such was the scene, such its features, such some of the elements of the vision which memory conjured up. How distinctly the characters live again—how vividly the old house, scene of joys, of happy hours, of trials and triumphs, rises before me—with the little mystery of gloom hanging over it.

The drama begins—the stage opens. The time was a spring morning. The air was fresh and sweet with the fragrance of grapes and wildings, and brought with it the healthy smell from the newly-turned mould of gardens. The hedges were gay with Lent lilies, and the blackthorn was everywhere shedding forth a crown of blossom. The sun shone brightly and merrily, playing in shadows on the graves, glancing on the windows of the church and schoolroom, glinting lights from the ivy on the wall, and striking out golden touches from the opening buds of the laburnum. The birdies were all in stir and twitter; the rooks cawed and fluttered round their nests in the trees by the old church-tower.

The air was full of scents and sounds—the world was full of life; and we, we boys, though too young to feel the power which, in spring, "turns a young man's fancy to thoughts of love," felt still the unrest and the movement, the issues and the impulses, of the young life which was growing around us. We were sitting about on the old stumps,

debating on flies and collars—for marbles were out, and fishing was coming in with us—and we were speculating on the coming of the salmon-spawn, the great event in our sporting era. Suddenly the back door of Trevenna's house opened, and forth came Quamino with a bound and a shout, as if he had been shot. Then recovering himself, he proceeded to dance a saraband; then would stop to give vent to several hi, hi, hi's, puffing them forth like blasts from a bellows; then would come on with a running dance, slapping his thighs, shouting out exclamations, and stopping every while in ecstasies of laughter.

"Hallea, Quamino, what is the matter?" said we.
"Is the devil dead?"

"Massa George, I really 'shamed of you speaking in dat are way. What de matter? Oh, golly! golly! plenty de matter. Never hear sich news since I war born. What you tink, gemmen?" he continued, drawing himself up with a look of grave importance. "God have been pleased to send my missus a little girl. It was born this morning; and Massa Trevenna he look so 'appy, I never see him look so as he took the leetle piccaninny in him arms, and said, 'God be praised, dere will be light on de hearth at last.'" Then he went off with

"Come let us dance and sing,
And Barbadoes' bells shall ring."

And as if in answer to the invocation, the church-bells struck out a merry peal, filling the air with joyous sound. "Oh golly, golly!—dat right. Ring away, good bells. Tell de news to all de people. Dis a great day for de house of Trevenna."

"I s'pose," suggested old Beelzebub, who had been peeping over the churchyard hedge during this scene, "as how you will be head nuss now, Quamino."

"I hope, saar, that I shall do my best to help de lady who 'ficiates in dat 'pacity."

"The cheeld will be well off with thee for nuss, I think," rejoined the sexton. "It only wants another black person for godfa'r, and 'twill be a blessed babby."

"I tink you forget your manners, Massa Will. You might 'spect my feelings on dis great 'casion, 'specially as Massa Trevenna hab give me de privilege to ask my friends to drink de young laady's health in a leetly ponch dis night."

The mention of punch converted old Will's gibes at once into most hearty congratulations, for he was always open to the temptation of a quiet debauch; and the prospect of a drinking-bout would always with him turn the balance betwixt saint and sinner.

"But how is it, Quamino," said one of the boys, "that you know anything about nursing? Where

did you serve your apprenticeship to that business?"

"Why, saar, me once hab two lubbly piccaninnies of my own—black as a crow—very lubbly piccaninny; and when dere moder was sick, or at de mill, me rock de cradle, and make de paap for dem; but Yellow Jack tak 'em both in one night. Poor piccaninnies!"

"But I thought," added his tormentor, "that you niggers were not allowed to have anything to do with your own babies; but that they were turned out to be suckled by the pigs or goats, or dragged up anyhow."

"Dat what they say at 'mancipation meeting, saar; but it not true—it one great lie. De nigger, saar, hab de feeling of a man for him offspring, and der laadies raaly hab too much feeling. I know one black laady dat kill her piccaninny with kindness."

"How was that?" was shouted out on all sides.

"Why, I tell you, saar, dis laady see her piccaninny one night look berry paale, and see him shiber and shaake all over, and she say, 'Poor piccaninny, him berry cold; me put him into de obben (oven) to keep him waarm. She put him in de obben, saar; and when she come in de marning, de piccaninny lie on him back, wid him mouth gaaping and him eye staring, 'tark and 'tiff as man-o'-war Buccra;—him dead. She kill him

wid too much kindness. Black laady raaly hab too much heart. But now me go and fetch de sago and de gruel for de missus."

Off he went, and the bell summoned us to school; but ever during the day, as we passed to and fro, the house of Trevenna wore to us a different aspect. The thought that guardian angels, following in the train of the young soul, were hovering round the threshold, and keeping watch and ward over the light which had just gleamed on that lonely hearth, shed, perchance, a holiness and beauty over its gloomy exterior, and sublimed it to our sight.

CHAPTER II.

"Holy is the sway
Of that mysterious sense which bids us bend
Toward the young souls now clothed in helpless clay—
Fragile beginnings of a mighty end;
Angels unwinged—which human care must tend."

Yes! holy is the sway, holy the influences, which the young life spreads around it. Mysterious the charm which its presence brings—the joy which it reflects—the sanctity it extends over its little sphere. Strange power is there in this young life—strange power to hallow misfortune, to beautify poverty, to soften pride, to hearten endeavour, to renew hope, to chasten wordliness, to inspire prayer. Strange is it, that this young life, so

helpless, so weak, so innocent, should by its coming stir up men anew to work and toil—should incite men to pray who had seldom prayed before—should rekindle hope in the embers of cold hearts—should relight love on fireless altars, and restore the strength of declining faith. Strange indeed, save that it seems to come as a message, a token from above, linking us with the spirit world—a claim on our care, yet a proof of our God's ; a trust to our love, and the gift of His—a renewal, a refreshing of covenants and promises. Well is it when it is thus welcomed, thus accepted.

It seemed to be so in the home of Roger Trevenna. The light on the hearth diffused itself far and wide. The man himself stepped out of his exclusion and gloom, and stood more fairly in the circle of humanity ; his soul looked out more brightly from his eye ; his face lightened ; his step was more elastic ; and his voice was mellowed to a kindlier tone. He would now more frequently stop at our playground, and would look out on us furtively from over the hedge and palings, and would smile at our jokes and pranks, but he was still a novice in speaking to the schoolboy nature ; he was yet new to the lessons which the young life was teaching him. To the poor he was another man. His charity was more genial ; he had words and sympathies, would offer comfort and communion to them now. With those of his own degree the

old reserve was as yet unrelaxed. It was not in one hour, or in one day, that the barriers and the outworks which he had raised up betwixt himself and the world could be undermined or shaken.

The light on the hearth beamed on the wife and mother with a gentle effect, radiating happiness on the calm, and beautifying her face by the expression of a spirit bathing in the sunshine of peace. She changed, as a picture does when moved from a bad light to a good one, all the soft touches and bright effects coming out and spreading a harmony of loveliness over the whole. From up that cradle-bed came a blessing which followed her out and in, as a present joy brightening her home and her life.

The house itself seemed to throw off its gloom and seclusion, and open itself more to the sunlight and the world. Its first advance was the throwing down the lattice-work of the gate, and allowing glimpses of flower-beds, and windows trellised with clusters of roses and jasmine, with fruit-trees and bushes opening out long vistas of luxuriance and longing to our eyes. The summer sun was shining brightly on the gardens, revealing all their beauty of leaf and flower, all their wealth of bud and blossom, and disclosing tempting visions of plums and peaches ripening on the walls, and raspberries and gooseberries hanging from their bushes, ripe and luscious, when the gate opened, and forth issued

a procession. There was the nurse carrying the little one—the Rose Trevenna that was to be—and the father and mother, proud and gladsome, accompanied by old Squire Grenfell and his wife, who, in right of old family friendship, had assumed the sponsorship. Bringing up the rear was Mister Quamino, rejoicing in a new coat and tremendous shirt-frill, and holding in his hand a large cake, which was to be given, according to christening custom, to the first person fairly meeting the party. So dignified and official was he, so impressed with the importance of the occasion and the necessity of a becoming bearing, that no salutation or gibe could tempt him from the proprieties. Even the query, why old Pepperpot, as one of the family, was not present, was answered only by a sidelong glance of contempt. Domingo, the bloodhound, was in attendance, stalking slowly by the side of the nurse, and looking up now and then at her burden. On none had the new-born wrought more change than on the dog. From the instant of its appearance he had attached himself to it; had followed it everywhere as body-guard; had obtruded himself into the nursery, and, when permitted, would lie with his large black head resting on the cradle, as though conscious how precious that life was to his master's house, and of the claim it therefore had on his guardianship.

Strongest of all the instincts which the dog shows

in his association with man, is his attachment to young life,—his tenderness towards it, his patience with it, his voluntary protectorship of it. To lick the hand which feeds, to fear the hand which strikes, is a common nature; but to watch over the feebleness of infancy, to bear with its frolics, to fondle its weakness, to soften down the savagery of strength and fierceness at its influence, is, perhaps, the most perfect and the most beautiful homage which the creature pays to the supremacy of man. It is the closest tie between nature and reason—betwixt the laws of instinct and the impulses of the soul.

As the procession came back, and the little new-made Christian, the little baptised Rose, passed us, we gave a sort of cheer, partly from the impulse of the moment, created by the unwonted interest which had grown round the occasion, partly from a desire to disturb the equanimity of Mister Quamino, who, however, acknowledged it most superbly, as though it were a personal compliment. In return for our interest, we were invited into the garden, a *terra incognita* to us, and permitted a free range amid the fruit-trees. Our *razzia* would have been as destructive as the ravages made by a flight of locusts, save for the remarks of Quamino, which rather shamed our voracity.

"Me quite s'prised," he would say, "to see young gemmen so hab liking for dem poor tings—we not

tink noting of dem in de Ingies. Dere we hab de pine-apple and de shaddock as big as my head—and de guava and de plantain. Hi! dem something like fruit. Raaly it great daay, when de missus bile de presaarve. Dere was de great copper like de vat for de beer, and all de laadies of de 'tation were dere, and all de piccannies licking um lips and um fingers when dem hab chance. It raaly great sight. I tink, saar, you nebber taste de pine-apple jam or de guava jelly.”

We felt in our hearts the mortifying conviction that we had not, and after some such grand speech, which would conjure up visions of Elysian fields luxuriant with pines and bananas, and of great halls where caldrons of sweets were seething and steaming continually, the fruit which before had an Eden look and flavour to us, would seem poor and grubby in our eyes.

The christening-day closed an era in the vision. The light on the hearth was just dawning, and yet how bright already had it made the little world on which it shone!

CHAPTER III.

The years of babyhood had passed away, when memory again takes up the vision, and we look once more on the home of Roger Trevenna. They had been sunny years — ripening years. The

young life had burst into sunshine ; the old hearts had ripened into happiness—an autumn happiness, with a touch of the yellow leaf, yet bright, rich, and cheerful. Trevenna was in truth younger than when we saw him last. Years had added to his age, but the youth which wells forth from the heart had renewed the vitality of the man—had given fresh springs to his being. The young life had reflected itself on his. Heart and brow were more open and glad some now, and his speech was loosed, and from his mouth came words of joy, cheer, and kindness. He had opened his house as well as his heart, and the barrier-gage of exclusion betwixt him and the world was thrown down. The walls were lowered almost to the ground, and around the paling which rose in its stead, clustered roses and clematis and honeysuckle, making, with intervening laurels and lilacs, a goodly screen, which fenced the garden in without shutting it out. Guests went in at the open gate, and there were welcomes and cheer within the hitherto closed doors. Old Squire Grenfell declared that Trevenna, like his Madeira, had taken a long time to ripen, and that most other men, and other wines, would have grown crusty and tawny with such long bottling.

Mister Quamino, like his kind, was getting fat and lazy, and finding the duty of head-nurse very light work, had devoted himself entirely to it, declaring it was some pleasure to wait on Missey

Rose, for that old Domingo was getting quite unsociable, and "as for dat Pepperpot, I tink he must hab de soul of ten hundred black nigger in him ugly carcass—him so cussed and so tiffy now, dat dere is no pleasure in him company."

Why linger so long in summoning up the soul of the vision, in letting in the "light on the hearth"? Why? Save that there was ever about and around it a brightness, a sacredness of joy, which the soul scarcely dare recall—a spiritualism of purity, hope, and loveliness which it hesitates to revive, almost as it would to reclaim a loved soul from the regions of bliss. As it appears once more, like the opening of a summer cloud, there comes with it a fulness of summer sunshine—a fulness of summer beauty. Sweet smells are wafted around, and lovely sights wave to and fro. Sweet music, the sound of summer winds, the waving of boughs, and the rustling of leaves and grasses, float over the memory, an overture of soft and gladsome melody. There is a large hawthorn-tree in the midst of a lawn, covered with bright pink blossom, which falls in light showers on the grass at the passing of every breeze. Around and beneath the boughs a young form is flitting and dancing in the sunlight, seeming to mingle with it, to catch it with every breath, with every glow of the fair face, with every wave of the golden hair, with every bounding step.

The step of childhood, the *pas* of beauty! We compare it with the bound of a fawn, the gambol of a lamb; yet these are but poor and halting comparisons. It is like nothing which the earth sees of grace or lightness, save the dancing of sunbeams or the playing of shadows.

Such was thy step, Rose! Such wert thou—a thing of light, and joy, and beauty. The bright blue eye beamed and laughed; the soft round face was alight with glee and laughter; the fair shoulders gleamed “white as hawthorn bud” or pearly shell, and the tresses which strayed and floated over them caught and reflected a hue from every light, spreading a maze of amber rays. Such wert thou, as thy light figure sported on the lawn. Well might Trevenna’s eyes gladden as they lighted upon it, and followed it, and rejoiced over it. It had a spell, too, for Quamino, as he sat on the grass pretending to work, but in reality watching every turn of Missey Rose, answering her questions and ministering to her pastime. Domingo, too, was stretched at full length in the sunshine, but his eye moved slowly round and round as the child ran and leaped, or stooped among the flowers. As she came nearer, he would lift up his great head, and lap out his tongue, and would suffer her to tie garlands around his neck, or hang bunches of flowers to his tail. Quamino would sometimes be subjected to the same process, and would lay his

ugly head in her lap, like another Bottom, to have it tricked out with bluebells and primroses, chuckling all the while, and mocking his fellow-victim. "Me tink, Massa Domingo, we look bretty pair of fools, like de Jacks-in-de-green. Eh? How you feel, ole fella?"

All the elements in her little world yielded and ministered to the young life. She was even made free of all the sanctuaries in the churchyard—might pluck blossoms from the favourite shrubs—weave daisy chains on the graves, or strew buttercups on the immaculate paths, without reproof; and old Will would lean on his spade and look at her, unless observed, when he would return to his misanthropy and his digging.

About this time we were advanced into shirt-collars and Horace, and the pulses of poetry began to beat fitfully in our nature. Often as we saw this garden scene, we strove to render it into heroics or Sapphics; but the thoughts would not fit into classic measure, and thus jingled themselves into rhyme:—

She comes with fairy footsteps;
Softly their echoes fall;
And her shadow plays like a summer shade
Across the garden wall.
The golden light is dancing bright
'Mid the mazes of her hair,
And her fair young locks are waving free
To the wooing of the air.

Like a sportful fawn she boundeth
So gleefully along ;
As a wild young bird she carolleth
The burden of a song.
The summer flowers are clustering thick
Around her dancing feet,
And on her cheek the summer breeze
Is breathing soft and sweet.

The sunbeam seems to linger
Above that holy head,
And the wild flowers at her coming
Their richest fragrance shed.
And oh, how lovely light and fragrance
Mingle in the life within !
Oh! how fondly do they nestle
Round the soul that knows no sin !

She comes, the spirit of our childhood—
A thing of mortal birth,
Yet bearing still a breath of heaven
To redeem her from the earth.
She comes in bright-robed innocence,
Unsoiled by blot or blight,
And passeth by our wayward path
A gleam of angel light.

Oh, blessed things are children !
The gifts of heavenly love,
They stand betwixt our worldly hearts
And better things above.
They link us with the spirit-world
By purity and truth,
And keep our hearts still fresh and young
With the presence of their youth.

Often did we hover around her as she passed, with Domingo carrying a basket, and Quamino mocking him, to make little offerings of eggs and shells which we had gathered ; and we seemed all

unconsciously to be drawn in to the fostering and guardianship of that young life.

About this time the recollection comes upon us, that there began to grow upon the father a sort of restless anxiety—a vague fear that some danger, some fate, might be hovering o’er the Light on his hearth. He would show this in many little ways and by many little signs ; but there were two things which then occurred to give a graver tone to his apprehensions, and a body to his fears. The showed of death fell across him like a foreboding omen, and the violence of man invaded the safety of his house ; yet these even brought not back the gloom to his face, but only shaded it with passing clouds.

CHAPTER IV.

The shadow of death brought the first fear.

Rose had a play-fellow, the niece of Squire Grenfell, an orphan, and the daughter of a favourite sister. Little Lucy Penrice was a gentle fragile thing, with large dark eyes, and straight black hair lying like a framework around the pale marble complexion. Not joyous as Rose, nor so agile, nor so graceful, she would yet enter into all the sports and gambols with a quiet earnestness and pensive pleasure ; and though her laugh rang not so loudly,

and her step was not so buoyant, yet her pale face would flush, and her deep eyes swim beneath their long lashes with gladness, as they together chased o'er the grass, or danced 'neath the trees. And she would sit for hours listening to Quamino's wondrous stories, with parted lips, and eyes bent fixedly with a sort of mysterious awe on his strange grotesque features. Hand in hand, and side by side, they glided on through the summer hours, playing on the lawn or in the Squire's park—sometimes riding along the deep glades, and over the sunny slopes, attended by the old huntsman, who had constituted himself riding-master. Here Lucy had the advantage. Early trained to back and manage her pony, she had learnt confidence and address; whilst Rose, who had been initiated by Quamino on Pepperpot, was comparatively timid and unskilful.

The experiment had been long debated, but 'twas only after much coaxing that Quamino was prevailed upon to trust her on the back of that "cussed old tief. Dere no knowing what tricks dat ole devil up to. P'rhaps he hab better manners with Missey Rose. She tame ebberthing; p'rhaps she tame dat darned old mule. So the thing was tried, and though Pepperpot did not show his pride of the burden he bore, by prancing and caracoling after the fashion of well-bred steeds, he behaved like a respectable middle-class quadruped, and

was wonderfully steady for one of his temperament—compensating himself afterwards for his forbearance by biting furiously at old Quamino, and half kicking his stall down. After one or two successful attempts, Rose was so pleased with the exercise, that her father sought far and near for a steed worthy of her; and there soon appeared a pony, which was to us, after our rough moorlings, quite a wonder of beauty. White, without a spot or mark—Arab-shaped, with a mane and tail flowing and silvery—it seemed only fitted for a fair and gentle thing like Rose, and we refrained even from putting it through the usual surreptitious ordeal.

On went the bright summer days—on went the bright summer life. Autumn came, and brought only a brighter hue on Rose's cheek; but on Lucy's there glowed little carmine spots bright with false, treacherous, hectic beauty. Autumn passed into winter, and the spots deepened—the fragile form grew more frail, the pale face thinner, and the dark eyes deeper and more hollow. Rose had now to seek her friend by the fireside, and there flitted around her, cheering her with song and glee, and lifting her to the window to see Mister Quamino improvise a nigger dance for her especial entertainment. The fireside was soon changed for the sick chamber. There poor Rose followed: her glee was hushed and stilled now; her young soul, awed by the shadow of death, could only love and pray, and

twine itself round the beloved object. Solemn and sacred is the commune of young spirits when death thus stands betwixt them—too sacred, too pure for world-worn intelligence ; yet doubtless the thoughts and utterances of such times pass right up to heaven, to live in the records of the holy and beautiful things said and done upon earth.

Long this young light waned and flickered ; then lighted up ; then waned again, gliding gently away without struggle, without pain, without fear, amid sweet thoughts and ministering love, upborne by agencies and visions we wot not of. At last, one morning, a messenger came and said there was one angel more in heaven. That day our playground was silent and deserted. The shadow of death passed darkly on sweet Rose, clouding for a while her whole being, hushing her voice, dulling her footstep, and shading the bright light which floated around her. The mother saw this change, and felt with a woman's instinct that the young life would spring up again fresher and purer than ever, after this first trial of grief.

It was not sorrow which fell on Trevenna when his daughter's play-fellow was thus taken from her ; it was a strange dread foreboding, a dark chilling fear brought upon him by the knowledge that death could touch youth. He could not understand, in his anxiety, why one should be taken and the other left, and saw in every shade, in every change, the

fearful shadow brooding over his Light on the hearth. At the funeral—we were all there, mournful and sad for a while as boys are, half-tearfully watching the falling of the mould and the placing of the sod, half-curiously marking the two robins hopping on the ivy over the old wall, and calling up legendary recollections of the Babes in the Wood—this contact with young death seemed to chill Trevenna like the touch of a skeleton, and to conjure up before and around him a fearful apparition of peril and woe: vainly did he strive to stave it off by hope, by precaution, and care; it still hung about and haunted him, starting up before Rose in her flowery path, hovering o'er her cradle bed, and brooding in spectral gloom o'er her golden tresses. Still Rose bloomed and grew in beauty, and the light of heaven shone upon her with the brightness of full and happy years.

The other source of apprehension was much more strange and mysterious. It made a choice *morceau* of gossipry for many days, and was passed on from mouth to mouth with every kind of marvellous and melodramatic addition. Thus ran the story in its first and simplest stage:—

One dark night in the beginning of winter the household was roused by the deep baying of Domingo, then by a loud scuffling in the passage leading from the nursery, mingled with growls, deep curses in a man's voice, and the screams of the

child. All at once was alarm and commotion. The mother rushed to her darling's cradle. The men followed the sounds on and on through the house, and into the courtyard—Trevenna foremost. When the main body arrived, they saw by the partial light of a lantern their master striving to draw off the dog from a man, at whose throat he hung with a fierce and savage gripe. The blood was flowing from both, and it was evident that the struggle had been close and deadly. The dog, mad with fury and the taste of blood, could only be forced from his hold by the strong hand of Trevenna, when almost choked with the grasp—and then, in his ferocity, turned for a moment on his master; but the instinct of obedience made him crouch for an instant. Then he was seized at once by the domestics at Trevenna's command, and held back, springing and struggling forwards, and howling with rage when unable to get free, his eyes glaring, his hair bristling like a mane, his whole body quivering with passion, his fangs glittering, and his mouth dropping blood. The man, his foe, was leaning against the wall, apparently faint and exhausted in the struggle. Trevenna caught the lantern and held it to his face, uttered one short exclamation as the light flashed for an instant upon it, and then started back and dropt the lantern to the ground. Some rushed at once to get another light, some to secure the dog.

When they returned, Trevenna and Quamino were alone, the one deadly pale, the other looking affrighted and scared. The man, robber, burglar, or whatever he was, had escaped over the low wall in the darkness and confusion, and was gone. The pursuit was made, but no trace or track was found. In the morning, drops of blood were discovered leading in an opposite direction to that which Quamino had persisted in making the search. Nothing was heard or found to throw much light on the affair. Entrance had been made over the wall, and through the back door, which was forced in a way too clumsy for a practised hand; a bowie-knife stained with blood, which accounted for Domingo's wounds and gashes, was picked up in the yard. The child had been startled from her sleep by a growl from the dog, and as she opened her eyes, saw him rush on a dark form in the doorway; terror kept her from seeing or hearing anything more distinctly. The servants declared, as servants always do on such occasions, that they had seen a large dark man lurking about the house for several evenings previously, but had not thought it worth mentioning, as robbery was so rare a thing in that place.

Many were the versions and interpretations of the story. All wondered that a man, evidently weakened and crippled as the robber was said to be, could have made his escape from a man so determined and powerful as Trevenna, aided too by

his black servant; and many suggested that the fury of the dog seemed as if it had been excited or exasperated by a remembrance of hatred and injury, as well as by an instinct of danger and the fierceness of the struggle.

For a time Domingo seemed so maddened and so dangerous, that it was thought necessary to chain him up in his kennel; and there he lay, sullen and almost motionless, refusing his food, taking no notice of any one, not even licking his wounds, and suffering none to touch them, until Rose went to him by stealth the next day, and began to pet and caress and fondle him. At first he was proof even against this, and then, as if some instinct had succeeded that of hatred and anger, he rose up, licked her hands and face, and returned to his old temper and habits. But from that hour he never left the child: he slept by her bed, he crouched beneath her chair, and followed her in all her goings, galloping by her pony's side or stalking along by her path, making sudden rushes over hedges and through gaps, to reconnoitre and search for concealed danger.

All was done, too, at the house, that could be done by bolt, bar, and night-patrolling, to make the watch and ward sure for the future. Yet the "shadow of death," and the secret peril to his child, cast a gloom once more on Trevenna, which lay on his happiness like a dark lowering cloud in a bright

sky; but the Light on the hearth still shone clear and bright and full.

CHAPTER V

Here there seemed to arise in the vision of past days, as an interlude, the revelation of Roger Trevenna's early life. This revelation was woven out of the loose threads of after-knowledge, inferences and facts picked up here and there, but wrought and spun by the power of memory into a little whole, a piece, a scroll-work, showing the pattern of the after-design, interpreting the present and the future by the past. From it the heart intuitively gathers a clue to the mystery of the gloom which had brooded over Trevenna and his house, and of the joy which the presence of young life brought—sees how the darkness of error had clouded the soul, and how the light of hope may lift it off, and leave only brightness and clearness behind.

In this interlude or revelation, we see two youths, brothers, going forth into the world to seek change and action, the one joyous, impulsive, thoughtless, sensual; the other graver, more steadfast, sterner in will and principle. These are John and Roger Trevenna. We see them, then, moving in a tropic scene, toiling and striving in the work of a West Indian plantation, heartful and earnest, good masters,

true partners, confident in themselves, trustful of one another—so trustful that they enter into bond and contract that their gains shall never be alienated, but shall become the right and property of the survivor of the two; and that if one be childless in law, the whole inheritance shall pass to the heir of the other. Then succeed dark scenes and tableaux in the drama. They are apart now, the brothers, though not as yet divided. Prosperity has increased their possessions and swelled their power, and we see their simplicity and trustfulness degenerating into arrogance, luxury, worldliness. In the division of the picture, a series of tableaux represent the drama of John's life. There is a man, in the lustihood of strength and spirits, overcast by the shadows of vices which are gathering around him; then we see him falling, coarse, sensual, mated with one below him—surrounded, borne down, by vicious influences and vicious agencies; then fallen, besotted, brutal, tyrannical, reckless. And then we look on the last scene of all: we see a man lying on his face in a balcony, with glasses and bottles around him; we see him raised up; we hear the verdict—"Dead—died by the visitation of God;" and none see there the hand of man. None know then how that his slaves, goaded to madness by cruelty and brutal wrong, had found him in his drunkenness, had bound a fatal cord round his throat, outside his cravat, and thus pressed out his

life, leaving no mark or sign of violence ; leaving him there on his own floor, “dead—dead by the visitation of God.” Then the curtain drops, then rises, and we see the other division of the picture, the action of the other life. The first scene rises and shows us Roger the younger brother alone—alone in strength and trial, standing aloof as yet from the temptations which beset him, as yet faithful and unyielding. Another scene, and a woman’s dark figure is moving across and beside him ; his foot has slipped ; the dark hour has come upon him, and his spirit in vain strives to escape from the meshes in which his passion has entangled him. Again the scene shifts, and a woman, profligate and vile, with her son—his son, base-born, and bearing the stamp of a degraded race—is dragging him down, down into an abyss of misery, shame, and despair. A hand, the hand of his own begotten, is raised to spoil him—is raised against his life ; the watchfulness of a dog, the faithfulness of a slave, ward off the danger. One more scene, and he is rising up against the sin which is crushing him, is turning his back on the scene where shame had blotted his life and degraded his soul — where a brother had lived and died foully. Onwards it moves, and he is in the land of his birth—has met one whom he had known and loved years ago—one whose heart had stood faithful through the trials of absence and neglect—one who consents to soothe

and comfort him. Onwards it moves again, and he is in the home of his youth, bearing on his heart the gloom of past folly and past trials—bearing in his heart scars of old wounds—expiating error in contrition and self-reproach—praying that in mercy the light of young life may gleam on his being which shall bring on him no shame, which shall pass on his name in honour, which shall save his inheritance from degraded heirship: the prayer is heard, and a light shines on his hearth.

Such was Trevenna when our story opens—a man on whom folly and death had shed a gloom—whose early life and early hopes had been blighted by error—who had sinned and sorrowed, and hoped that penitence might avert retribution, and that he might rejoice and be glad in the fair promise before him.

And the light shone on his hearth.

Shall it brighten there, and grow more radiant and radiating, or shall it grow pale, and set darkly and sorrowfully, leaving darkness behind? This the future of our vision, as it speeds onwards, will reveal.

CHAPTER VI.

“The stately homes of England,
How beautiful they stand !
Amidst their tall ancestral trees
O'er all the pleasant land.”

The stately homes of England ! They have no equals. It may be right to carp at their architectural defects. As edifices, as masses of stone and mortar, they may be incongruities, defiances of art ; but see them as homes set in the midst of nature—take them with their accompaniments of tree and shrub and park, their accessories of garden, covert, stream, woodland, and wilderness, of glade, grove, and dell—and they present a harmony, a whole, a perfectness of pictorial effect, a unison, a community between man and creation, which seldom characterises palazzo, Rhine castle, château, quinta, casino, villa, or kiosk. Their association with nature, too, is no off-hand connection, no arm's-length meeting. Up to their very threshold sweeps the green turf ; the boughs of trees hang over their roof-tops ; the light breezes breathe on their casements, and bear with them the song of birds and the smell of flowers. The narrow gravelled walk or carriage-drive, the light palings, make no line of demarcation, raise no barrier ; the eye passes straight from window to portico, to turfy terraces, grassy slopes, clumps

of trees, and the waving shades of giant oaks, the moving forms of grazing herds, and the passing flight of wings; the ear takes in at once the caw of rook, the carol of the throstle, the gentle symphonies of the wind passing through the grasses and leafy branches, the sound of "some rejoicing stream," or the murmuring of a brook; the sense inhales at once odours from flower-beds, fragrance from shrub, freshness from surrounding verdure.

The man in his home stands face to face with Nature; his life goes forth to mingle with her life, his soul hourly and daily feels her presence.

As the homes are, so mostly are the men who live in them. Not moulded by conventional art or form, perhaps, but fresh, strong, and useful, hearty and heartful, drawing from nature the culture which many seek only in social refinements, and dashing the mannerism of breeding and *ton* with the free impulses caught from fellowship with the outer world.

Such a home was Penhaddoc Park—such a man was old Squire Grenfell. The old man in his home was a portrait well set. It was a bright gladsome place, stately enough, but with more of beauty than stateliness. All other effects were sacrificed here to beauty. All the rules of landscape making were violated again and again to let in the sunshine, to preserve an old tree, to encourage

a wilderness of wildings and briers, to retain an old moss-grown bridge, an old knowe, where early flowers grew, or to keep the old road winding under mossy banks, and betwixt old oaks and beeches, or through a deep dingle. The house had in itself no especial character, came under no particular denomination of style; was merely substantial and handsome. The wings, with their bay mullioned windows, were connected by a rather heavy colonnade, from which a short flight of granite steps led down to the gravelled path. Whatever there was of formality or coldness in the structure was toned by the white smoothness of the stone, and the invasion of ivy and Virginian creeper, which were allowed free swing and play for their luxuriant fancies. In front stretched a fair wide vista of park scenery, intercepted only by an old oak which stood before the library window. It was an old tree, but as an oak had scarcely passed its *première jeunesse*, and was lusty and burly in the full strength of gnarled trunk and vigorous spreading boughs. Artists, landscape-gardeners, formalists, hygeists, had again and again spoken its doom. It spoiled the view, destroyed the perspective, darkened the windows, made the walls damp; spite of all, it had stood. It had roots deeper and stronger than its own—old memories, early-day associations and recollections, which were twisted and

twined around the Squire's heart — these made its safety. On the other side, near the drawing-room, was a Portugal laurel, in which a nightingale had built its nest. This was also sacred; and at night, when the mellow rich "jug, jug" was heard, the piano and harp and song would be hushed in deference to the natural melody, which poured in through the open casements. To the right, a narrow path ran through a shrubbery, thick and luxuriant with thorn, syringa, laurel, arbutus, acacia, and the hundred-and-one plants which in English ruralism vary every shade of green and every shape of blossom. In the midst, a rhododendron had annexed a large share of the sward by throwing up shoots in every direction, which spread around in masses of flower and leaf, sloping downwards, tent-like, in folds of foliage from the parent stem. Beneath this covert the rabbits had formed a colony; and it was curious enough, ever and anon to see a broad leaf move upward mysteriously, and then a head and ears protrude themselves, or a tail and legs disappear suddenly. After a while, the path, growing narrower and more mazed by the grass and underwood, would be lost altogether in tangles of brier and bushes. The drive wound, as has already been said, in most meandering turns, avoiding all broad and straight effects, and leading suddenly on glimpses and unexpected touches

of beauty. Another and shorter road led towards the gardens and stables, through what was called the Lady's Meadow. There the grass grew in long thick tufts, and along the hedge the turkeys, in their season, sat brooding in state; and there also stood an oak, lone and solitary, an eremite, without companion or kind, and subject, from its isolation, to the degradation of having carrion for the hounds suspended from it by hooks. Garden-trees threw their shade over the meadow, and a tiny stream trickled through it, stagnating here and there in tiny pools. From a tragic legend attached to one of these the meadow had its name. It was said that a lady of the Grenfell race and her lover had wandered forth into the meadow on a moonlight night. They were seen last linked arm in arm, strolling towards the streamlet. In the morn she was found lying on her face in the water; her lover was never seen or heard of again. Of course, her spirit haunted the spot, and had been seen again and again by domestics who loved the moon. Quamino, on one of his visits to the butler, had seen with his own eyes the thin white form floating on the pond, and could never be persuaded that it was one of the swans making a moonlight voyage.

If there was some pretence to regularity in the front of the house, the back denied it altogether; scoffed at, repudiated, and set it at naught en-

tirely. It had been witness and residuary legatee to every vagary and whim which every successive Grenfell had conceived. There was a sort of family sacredness about the front, but here every wicked will had worked itself out most recklessly. A bow had been thrown from a study, and projected like the back of an oven; a latticed window had been set in a boudoir, a small balcony thrust from a nursery, and a verandah over the bower-room faced the garden-house, a quaint old place, built of spars and unhewn stones, and covered with mosses, ivy, and periwinkle. It looked as if some of the minor designs and sketches in books on architecture had been pasted together, and placed side by side. These eccentricities, however, looked forth on a scene consistent and perfect in its prettiness. Beds of verbena and heliotrope, baskets of roses and carnations, groups of sweetwilliam and pansies were set and shaped on the green sward, o'er which trailed many a wilding bough and bud; old stumps, from which fell clusters of rich red creepers, stood here and there, and there was a row of them with bright festoons hanging from one to the other; lilacs, box, privet and guelder roses, lightly fenced in the sides of this garden-plot; and at the top, a low hedge of brier and eglantine, with hop-tops fantastically wreathing and shooting out above, only half hid the clover and corn fields beyond. In different corners were

turf or wooden seats placed so as to catch the changes of the sunlight, and a wide vista opened to the setting sun. 'Twas a summer eve, and old Squire Grenfell loitered about on the gravelled path in front of his house, now stopping to pat a dog, now to take a look across the park, and now to give a passing word to his lady, who sat beneath the colonnade. He was the squire of other days, so often portrayed, so well remembered by all who can look back beyond this age of utilitarianism. Ripe as an old wine, ruddy as an autumn, sturdy as an old tree, he was the very type of his class. The locks were partly grey which fell behind his ears, and the clear blue eye was calm and steady; the face was fresh and unwrinkled, and the form was falling from its muscular set into that half looseness, which, ere it degenerates into bulkiness or obesity, looks well and comely with old age. The Squire seemed attired for a ride. Judging by the brown tops, the cords, the blue coat with plain brass buttons and broad flaps, the double-breasted kerseymere waistcoat, the hat low-crowned and broad-brimmed, and the whip stuck in the pocket, he was always conceiving that intent, for this was his invariable out-door dress. Invariable, out door and in, was the white cravat laid in full loose folds, and fastened by an old diamond-brooch, and the long watch-chain, with a massive bunch of seals at the end.

A traditionary character had descended with the Grenfells from generation to generation. Men of the open air, men of the field, men of the home, men of narrow spheres and large sympathies, of few duties and strong feelings, of simple lives and single purposes; they were ever behind their age in fashion; in advance of it in feeling; below it in enlightenment and intellectual culture; before it in moral impulses and truthfulness; laggards, perhaps, in political wisdom, but honest, faithful administrators of their several functions. The character, as it passed downwards, though preserving its nature originally, took a tone from the different ages. The father of our Squire was of the thorough sporting class, and on returning thanks, when the health of the new-born son and heir was drank, was reported to have said, "That he hoped to bring him up as a good sportsman and a good Christian." The son inherited the love of field-sports, but refined them by other pursuits and acquirements. He was still, however, earnest in the belief that a gentleman should be also a man, that he should support the superiority of his class by manly attributes, as well as by mental endowments or conventional graces; and held, that to acquire these, other nurture was required than that of the closet or *salon*. Now and then, however, he showed a taint of the old leaven, especially on the judgment-seat; there he enacted

the laws of the field like a very Draco, though in other cases his sentences might have been written in milk. Once he astonished the bench of brother magistrates by inveighing bitterly and violently against a poor wretch who stood in the box for some petty offence of trespass or poaching, and shouting out, when asked what he knew against him, "Know against him! Why, that fellow would murder his father, would rob a church—do anything; last week he ginned a fox." One of his peculiarities was, to perform all his journeys on horseback, a servant riding behind with the saddlebags; and he had never been seen inside a carriage, except on the occasion of his being sheriff, and then he fidgeted and tossed on his seat, to the great discomposure of ermined dignity. Oft-times such homes and such men are marred by *mesalliances*. A fine lady—a vulgar or artificial one—a fashionable lioness or an amazon, would have jarred on the harmony of the whole. Luckily, like met like here. Of an old country stock like his own, the wife could sympathise with his pursuits, his principles, and even his fancies. Feminine, but not delicate, healthful in mind and spirit, she could participate in most of his tastes, could understand all; could listen to the details of a fox-chase, or the killing of a salmon; could give advice on laying out the grounds or cutting down a tree, and ever administered the details of charity,

as women alone can do. Gentleness, the gentleness of the heart, was her charter of ladyhood, a gentleness which repudiated falsetto tones, or the acted mannerism of phrase or gesture, and reposed on an innate tranquillity and nobility of soul. Gentleness! most beautiful of the moral attributes; most pleasant of the social! Blessed be its presence! Blessed ever be that spirit which garbs itself in love and charity; which looks even on error with sweetest pity, and has courtesy for all and every one; which shrinks not only from words and thoughts that wound or sting, as philanthropists would turn from a worm in their path, but will not even harshly rub the down from such butterfly wings as foibles and prejudices. In this gentleness she was educated for the mission of almoner, a friend to the poor. In those times such missions were supposed to need education and training. It was then thought a necessary preparation to learn the language of the hearts, feelings, and habits of the people, for whom the mission was meant; not to rush upon them as on a tribe of Ashantees, or with the zeal of Crusaders, fiercely enforce it on the masses of ignorance and sin. So it was then, so it will be again, when the enthusiasm of missions has subsided, and the theories of regeneration and development have fallen back into the old beaten world-worn tracks. Gentle she looked as the evening

sunlight fell on the soft face, which yet retained the autumn shade of bloom, and on the soft silky hair, streaked here and there with silvery braids, and on the full figure, sunk now in graceful repose. She was reading and knitting by turns, or indulging in that musing reverie which *habitués* of the world would call dulness, but which, perhaps, are among the most delicious of life's calmer pleasures: a few summer plants grouped around filled in the picture.

The dog, the sporting dog, was largely represented there and then by patriarchs of tribes. Under the old oak lay an old Talbot, the last of a race, with his huge head stretched between his paws, and his large ears hanging down like the leaves of a giant cactus. With half-shut eyes he followed his master's movements, watching for signs of a start. Old Grouse the pointer, of the old breed and old time, when steadiness and strength were more thought of than fleetness, deep-chested, broad-nosed, and strong-legged, took turn and turn with the Squire, pacing when he paced, halting when he halted, and seeming to take the same interest in the view. A small Blenheim gambolled about his mistress, or made sudden rushes on a stray rabbit, arousing from their corners or explorations spaniels and terriers, and drawing them on by his noise to join him in a *mêlée razzia* in the fastnesses of the rhododendron.

Presently the Squire's face brightened as he

exclaimed, "By Jove, here they come!" And then, like a bright gleam, Rose on her pony was seen through the intervals of the shrubs, through the branches of the great trees, and by the dancing, leaping water, as she cantered up the park. Behind her, very unlike a bright gleam, came Quamino, sorely tried by the cantrips of Pepperpot, sorely tried by his gold-laced hat. That hat was to him what crown and sceptre are to some monarchs, what diamonds are to dowagers, what ribbons are to courtiers, at once a glory and a trial. It had brought him into all sorts of scrapes and troubles. It was always coming into contact with doorways or boughs, was always being carried off by chance gusts, or tipped from its equilibrium by any odd movement. Once, when perched on a branch scone at a meeting-house, it had furnished the preacher with an illustration of the wicked, who bring their gold and their silver into the house of the Lord. It must be confessed that it was a strange head to fix a dignity upon. Like Sancho Panza's, if mitres had been rained on it from heaven, 'tis doubtful if any had fitted it. Had the efforts of Christie & Co., the handyworks of Collet à Paris, the fezzes, turbans, sombreros, Panamas, and wide-awakes, from all parts and all lands, been poured upon it in a full shower, 'tis a question if any one would have been found an easy or comfortable fit. Nature had intended that head

to be unadorned save by its woolly covering. So thought not Quamino, who never rose to the height of his grandeur until the hat was fixed upon it.

"Ah! Rose, Rose, sweet, blooming Rose, my summer flower, here you are at last," said the Squire, kissing her cheek, and lightly fondling her golden curls as he lifted her from the pony.

"Well, god-pa, you give me prettier names than Quamino, for he is always singing something about Rose, Rose, my coal-black Rose; whether he means me or not, I don't know," said she, laughing, as she was handed onwards to the caresses of Dame Grenfell.

Meanwhile Trevenna and his wife had arrived by the short cut through the lady's meadow, and we, Gerald Grenfell and myself, emerged from the gardens, where we had been making a sort of exploratory expedition, and made the group and the greetings complete.

The dogs, too, had their greeting. The Talbot and Domingo touched noses with a cold courtesy, after the fashion of Oxonians, or Englishmen meeting abroad. Grouse was less stiff, though also very stately in his welcome; the rest were more demonstrative, some cringing and fawning round him, some making furtive rushes, and giving little short yelps at him, behaving generally as little things do in the presence of a great one.

"Don't you think, god-pa, I am improved in my

riding?" said Rose after a while, looking up in the old man's face; "did you see how I held Snowdrop in hand, and how well I kept him at his paces coming up the park?"

"Oh yes, you are growing a perfect horsewoman, quite a Di Vernon; I shall be taking you to the cover side with me soon; and as for Quamino, he is getting such a first-rate jockey, that I must get him to ride the next steeple-chase for me."

"Ah, Massa Squire, you pokey de fon at Quamino. How can ride that old debil? I tink him always hab a fly under him tail. Me want him to go so" (imitating an amble), "to look quite proper in de town with Missey Rose, and den him surely give plunge and kick, and me go up and up, and de hat bomp and bomp, and all de little boys laugh. Oh, him tarned ole debil, dat Pepperpot."

"Well, never mind, Quamino, we will mount you better some day," said the Squire: "I am glad, however, to see that you have that fine hat still. They told me that the lads wrestled for it at the Whitsun games."

"Hi! Squire, dat all de game of dat Bob Mullis; me gib him hiccory-nut for dat."

This was a sore subject, one of the trials he had undergone in behalf of his hat. The story was, that standing one day by the ring at a wrestling-match, with the hat well to the front, some wag had toppled it over, and that it was there and then

seized by the sticklers as a gage of battle. Quamino, following it eagerly, was also set upon, speedily swathed in a wrestling-jacket, and to his great surprise found himself in the grip of a practised player, who, after exhibiting him in all his attitudes and grimaces to an admiring audience, laid him playfully on his back. On rising, the first thing he saw was his hat,—the hat, stuck on the pole upon which the prizes were usually exhibited, labelled “For the best man.” His rage and fury then were most grotesque, and made the joke and laugh of many an after day.

Moving on to the portico, he made a most elegant obeisance to the lady of the house. “Me hope me see de laady berry well to-night, and dat all de fam’ly quite well.”

“Very well, I thank you, Quamino,” was the reply; and she too had then her quiet fling at him.

“I hear that you were at the meeting for the abolition of slavery last night. I hope you were edified, and gave them some valuable information on the subject.”

“Yes, me dere, laady, and me neber hear sich fool-man’s talk. Dere one preacher dat call me ‘him poor black broder.’ Me scorn de connection. Me hab white blood in me veins, me hab white heart, and me tink dat dis tight skin, tho’ it war a leetly black, look more better dan him scarecrow carcass; so me tell dem.”

Thus Quamino was passed on from one to the other, like a liqueur, until he came to our turn, and was then assailed with one of the old jokes, for schoolboys are not often inventive in their wit.

"Hallowa, Quamino, how many blue beans make five?" an arithmetical problem which always posed and bothered him sorely.

"Hi, massa Gerald, you raally too cleber—too cleber for Quamino. You see dem five crow on de tree. Now, 'spose you bang and kill two, how many left—eh?"

"How many left? why, three, to be sure."

"No; dey wasn't. Dey sabe too much for dat. Dey fly away. Me tink young genmen at class'cal school know more better dan dat." And away he marched, strutting and chuckling at his triumph.

Tea was brought round in the open air, and with it all kinds of cakes, and baskets of fresh fruit just plucked. Then we all strolled through the shrubbery, and by a little wood path down towards the brook, the elders moving on quietly and sedately; we, the young fry and the dogs, scampering and scouring over the banks and through the copse, startling birds, and trampling down moss and wild-flowers. In a little dell by the water's edge was a quaint old summer-house, perched on the top of some old roots, twisted, twined, and knotted into a fantastic framework. Over it hung the shadow of a tree, and behind was a beetling rock overgrown

with mosses and creepers, which had spread themselves over the thatched roof, and fell trailing wild wreaths and festoons down the sides and front. From either mossy seat within, the rivulet could be traced in all its windings, and the ripple of its waves over the pebbles mingled softly there with the rustling of boughs and leaves, and the playing of the breeze. The setting sun now lit the pools into a bright glow, and little gusts ever and anon swept over them, ruffling and dimpling them for a moment; swarms of flies flitted over them, and here and there the rise of a trout left a tiny widening circle of waves. 'Twas the scene of a summer eve. Who has not seen it? Yet who would tire to see it again and again, bringing fresh beauty, new thoughts, at each repetition. When such things pall, shut up the book of nature, close this word of God, for it has no longer a sign, or voice, or inspiration, for the soul.

An open glade was our playground; there, too, the mothers sat on an old trunk. In the summer-house Trevenna and the Squire held converse more serious and confidential than their wont.

"I didn't see you on the bench to-day, Trevenna," said the Squire, after some interesting observations as to whether the trout that rose in the pool under the rock was the one he had hooked the day before, or whether the mist rising from the river was a sign of heat or rain. "There was not much busi-

ness, no poaching, though that fellow, Tom Nicholl, was brought up on suspicion of throwing lime into the river to kill the fish. We had, however, rather a serious case of housebreaking. By the by, did you ever hear anything more of the fellow who gave you that fright? I should have thought that you and the dog and Quamino would have tackled him, though I don't think much of the darkie's pluck; the dog, however, was to be depended on, and you used to have a firm strong grip. I never met with anything of that sort," continued he, maundering back into old recollections; "but a curious circumstance occurred once to me in looking after poachers. My father one day discovered a wire near the west-end plantation, and saw the gap by which the man who set it had come and gone. In the evening he took me—quite a boy then—with him to watch the spot. It was agreed that I should remain close by the wire, and that he should make a detour, and return in another direction, avoiding the gap. It was almost dark; and I remember that my heart beat quickly at the excitement and novelty of my situation. Suddenly in the gap there appeared the figure of a man cautiously and quietly climbing over the hedge. I made one rush, and sprang upon him as he came down; we grappled and fell together on the grass, tumbling over and over in the struggle. He was stronger and heavier than I was, and I felt my

strength failing, and a dizziness coming over my eyes ; he was fumbling, too, to get free play for a short stick he carried : in a sort of despair I raised my hand to strike, when a gleam of moonlight fell upon us, and I saw my father's face. He had come back, contrary to agreement, by the gap, and each had taken the other for the poacher. I never trembled so as at that moment, and my father could not look at me for days without shuddering at the thought of what might have happened."

Some faces show emotion by deep flushes or fiery eye-flashes ; some by a cold pallor, and a fixedness of eye and feature. As the Squire went on and on with his story, a paleness came o'er Trevenna's face, and the features grew still, cold, and fixed as stone.

"I never could think," rambled on the Squire, returning to the first idea, "what that fellow's motive could have been. Why he passed all the passages and closets where the plate or valuables might have been, and how he stumbled on the child's room, is a mystery to me." Turning round, he saw the paleness on his friend's face grow more deadly, and the drops of perspiration stand coldly on the forehead. "I have said something to hurt you now, Trevenna—have touched some sore. If there be anything painful or embarrassing in this matter, let it pass by for ever. John Grenfell is not the man to unkennel any one's secret. But if

there be aught in which a helping hand or kindly thought can aid or comfort you, speak it out, man. The second barrel often brings down the bird, and a second head may wing a difficulty. At any rate, a clean breast often makes a free heart. So, let it be as you will, silence or counsel; you may trust me for either. Our fathers for many generations have been friends and playfellows, and I would be true to you for the sake of old associations, if nothing else. Say the word, then—shall it be a still tongue or open heart betwixt us?"

At this appeal Trevenna's face changed and changed again, showing the deep workings of an inward struggle. Once or twice he made an effort as if to speak; but the words seemed to stick in the throat, and there would come instead a low gurgling sound, and the dead pallor would return, and the cold sweat-drops burst forth afresh. At last he seemed to gather up his strength into resolve; the inward workings settled into a calm; the throes of heart-pain subsided, and then, laying his hand on the Squire's arm, he revealed in fitful, fervid utterances, the story of a life.

"Yes," he said; "I will tell all. There may be much of shame in my story, much of error; but there has been also much suffering, much retribution; and though the doom of expiation may not yet be fulfilled, I feel that my soul has through the long years gradually been clearing itself from

the degradation of its sin; and since God has given me my sweet child, it has been no longer dark; and come what will now, whilst that blessing remains, there will be light on my hearth, light in my soul. You know, John Grenfell, how that at my father's death our family property was found to have dwindled and dwindled in successive generations, until there was little left, save some plantations in the West Indies, which had always been managed by an agent, and with which we never concerned ourselves much, as long as the proceeds were regular and ample; and how we, my brother John and myself, resolved to set forth for our Barbadian estates, and see what fortune and endeavour might do for us there, rather than stay at home, and find our property falling off field by field, and ourselves sinking gradually down to the state of poor gentlemen.

"Well, away we started—young, strong, and sanguine—differing in temperament, but united enough in feeling and intent to be good yoke-fellows in the earnest work before us. The sphere was new, not very genial perhaps, or very accordant with old habits and early training; yet it had its excitements and attractions. We found on our estates the usual effects of absenteeism. The land had deteriorated, and fallen into disorder; the buildings were dilapidated, and the slaves were suffering from the grossest neglect and maltreat-

ment. Here was work to do, and we stood to it manfully. Year by year we began to reap results; prosperity dawned before us; order and wellbeing sprang up around. With our slaves we were especially successful. It is some time ere fresh young blood yields to the influences of climate, and the young fresh nature equally resists for a while the influences of vicious habits and society. Thus in the strength of our own hearts, still pulsing with home feelings, we were able quietly and calmly to carry out our work of reform on those around us. Character always tells, even on slaves; and we soon found that we could do more by personal influences than many had effected by the strictest penal systems,—could do often more by word or look than by whip or shackle. John, especially at first, had a wonderful mastery over them. His nature took more with them than mine. His strength, his jovial spirit, his humour, had great attractions for them. They chimed in well with their own rough sports, their love of fun and drollery. They would do anything—even work—for him; and his voice, laugh, or presence would always set them agog, and draw out all the best points of their nature. He was their constant theme and admiration. ‘Hi!’ they would say, ‘dere Massa John—how him walk—how him talk—how him work—how him laugh—and, my gar, how him drink!’ alluding to his practice of quaf-

ving large goblets of cane-juice at a draught. Thus all went well; we lived on and on, prospering, toiling in kindly brotherhood of hope and intent. In these days of our confidence, under the influence of the feeling of community, which so often grows up betwixt men labouring and succeeding together, we made an agreement, a bond, that whatever wealth was won should be common; that in case of one dying, the survivor should inherit all—that should one be childless, the children of the other should be heirs to both; and there even gleams upon me a vague consciousness—a dark recollection—that, more than this, there was a compact binding us to unite the property by marriage, should one have sons and the other only a daughter or daughters; and that, failing this contract, the whole inheritance should go in the male line—so anxious were we to preserve our newly-gotten gain from the causes which had frittered away and exhausted our ancestral estates. This clause has haunted me of late like a spectre, and is more a dread than a reality.

“About this time our common interest compelled a temporary separation, and I went away to superintend a plantation in a different part of the island. Here I was alone, without companionship, without communion, and soon found that isolation is more dangerous to the soul even than free society. I began to lose that elasticity and buoyancy which

often protect the heart from debasement or corruption, and keep it bounding and rising continually above temptation and beyond the passions. My energy, too, took a more selfish aim and purpose, and my spirit grew unsocial and less sympathising. Then came my trial and my fall. In a hut near my own house, close to the gate, so that I must needs pass it in all my outgoings and incomings, lived a mulatto girl with an old crone, her natural or adopted mother. They belonged to the property, yet, in some way, had gained a privileged exemption from the usual routine of labour, and performed only such light service about the house and grounds as they chose. They were from Grenada, and the girl showed signs of Spanish blood in her fine rich colour, her oval face, full voluptuous figure, and in the easy grace with which she moved. Ever as I came and went, she stood before me a present temptation—obtruded before me in all her attractions. At first I withstood it well, and felt nought but indifference. Then use had its effects, and the cravings for some companionship wrought upon me. Our salutations became longer, our meetings more frequent. I looked for them, then sought for them, and then—'twas the old story—we fell. From that hour my peace was gone. The spell of passion soon passed away, but the curse of sin clove to me, and entered into my life. I was no longer alone. With me

and beside me was one who influenced my every action; whose presence was a daily debasement, drawing down my soul step by step in pollution and misery. The nature of this girl was base, below the ordinary level of her kind; her temper and passions were strong, fierce, and wayward. Money, finery, pleasure, were her sole objects. If thwarted in her tastes, she would become furious, demon-like, and soon I scarcely dared to provoke these bursts. A love of power, and a vindictiveness towards those who offended or displeased her, often showed themselves in little acts of tyranny and oppression, in which, God help me! I was often an unwilling abetter; and I became the veriest slave on the plantation—a slave with the sense of slavery hanging on me as a millstone. In time a child was born—a son. It could bring no joy, no pride, yet for the time it was a bond and tie between us. This soon ceased. The boy grew up vicious and wilful. It was in vain I strove to curb or subdue his passions. The mother fostered and fed them by indulgence, by example, by every encouragement. Very early appeared signs of that deep and innate depravity which makes one shudder for the future. In the vices of the child I saw the coming retribution of the man. In my own heart there dwelt a sense of moral degradation, and I saw this ever and ever reflected in the bearing of those around me. The obedience paid was more

that of fear than respect, and I missed the cordial confiding tone which once existed in the intercourse betwixt me and my people. The bearing of dependants, like the shadows on a dial, indicate the stages and changes in the moral revolutions. I was fallen, and, as a consequence, self was more and more in the ascendant. My only thought was to get rich—to make money enough to escape and throw off the fetters, the irons of which entered into my very soul. God forgive me! to this thought I sacrificed everything—for this I toiled, for this I wrought, for this I taxed hardly and relentlessly the labour of others, for this I racked the land under my care; and I was growing rich. The hour of release seemed near, the day of liberty was already dawning.

“Meanwhile, all I saw and heard of my brother was far from comforting. His free jovial temperament made him more susceptible of the vitiating influences of the society around him. Gradually he yielded and yielded; the temptations fastened themselves into habits. The debauch became more frequent—excess habitual. The canker of daily vice was eating into his fine nature, spreading and stretching its roots through mind and body. He was not so far gone, however, but that a saving hand might have drawn him back from the abyss. I tried, but I had lost my power. My own sin paralysed my arm, and made my tongue falter.

Yet there was hope—hope that his nature might rebound and recover itself. This hope was soon lost. In one of his reckless fits he proposed to, and then married, a Creole lady. Her character toned rather with the encouragement of his vices than with their reform. Her influence became paramount—mine was repudiated, my counsel rejected, and my own sin thrown in my face. Hence we lived apart—seldom meeting—never with affection or in confidence; but rumours came to me of increased profligacy—of health, means, and character wasted in debauchery—of a temper soured by vice and disease; and soon, very soon, it began to be heard that the popular planter was becoming a tyrant,—that punishment, harsh and intemperate, inflicted in haste and passion, was more and more frequent on his estate—that complaints, murmurs, then words of wrath and threats of vengeance, were muttered sullenly and secretly among the people with whom he was once a sort of idol. The time was a crisis with us both. To me, thank God, it brought only warning—a dread, dark warning—fearful enough, bitter enough; to him it brought death—an evil, violent death. O, God! I scarce dare to recall the events of that time; memory revolts against passing back again across those dark limits. But it must be told.” Here Trevenna gasped, as if for breath and strength, ere he went on with the story of his life. “It was a hot, sultry

afternoon, and I was sitting in my room with closed blinds, striving to be cool—striving to forget the growing misery at my heart—striving to see brighter spots in the future, when suddenly my son entered, his face flushed, and his eyes glaring with intoxication. He had grown now into youth, and we had become all but estranged. Our meetings were only altercations—reproof on my side, and insolence and anger on his. He only sought me to get money. That was his errand now. Heated and excited, he demanded a larger supply than ever I had granted before. I remonstrated; he persisted with insults and oaths. Roused from my forbearance, I gave a flat denial, and ordered him from my presence. Scarce had I spoken, when—O God! it is too horrible to speak—his hand lifted and raised a knife to strike me—me, his father. Horror paralysed me; I could not move hand or foot to arrest the blow. The blade gleamed before my eyes. At the instant Domingo, then almost a puppy, sprung from his place at my feet at the raised arm. The blow was turned, and the knife fell with broken force on the dog's ribs. His growls and the noise brought Quamino to the spot. The wretched boy was disarmed, and led away, yelling out imprecations and threats. I was left alone—alone with my thoughts—alone with my conscience. 'Twas a dark, dark hour. Those only who have wrestled with remorse, and stood face to

face with the doom of retribution, can know the agony of such hours.

“Scarcely had the sweat-drops dried on my forehead, my limbs ceased to tremble, or my heart to beat so wildly, when a horse’s steps were heard, and a man galloped up to the door to say that my brother was dead—had died in the night of a fit—was found lying dead in his balcony in the morning.

“My own woe made me callous for the moment—hard, stony. I had no grief—no tear for my brother. I could scarce comprehend who or what it was that had been taken from me. Mechanically I went with the messenger—mechanically went on and on—on through the cane-fields—on through the avenue of cocoa-nut trees—on through the door—up the stairs—on to the balcony, and there he lay on the floor—he, my brother—dead. There he lay, stricken in the fulness of life. Taken in the midst of enjoyment, a shattered glass was beside him—a cigar lay in the poor clasped fingers. Could this bloated, discoloured corpse be he who had so lately stood beside me strong, lusty, and lifeful—who, a few years since, had started forth with me fresh, ardent, and hopeful? And here was the end—death, sin, misery. For a while I knelt down by him alone; all the early memories—all the early hopes—all the early thoughts, came rushing back, and with them came the early feelings,

softening and hallowing the heart, and kindling it into prayer; and there, by that dead brother, were uttered prayers which were answered in after-life—there were formed resolves which have been firmly, patiently fulfilled.

"The cause of death, on inquiry and examination, was said to be apoplexy, and so it seemed—so it was believed. Shortly after, it was darkly whispered about that man's hand had done the deed—that some slaves, goaded to vengeance by wrong and punishment, had climbed up the balcony whilst he was asleep and insensible, had tied a cord round his neck outside the cravat, to leave no mark of violence—strangled him, and laid down the body in the semblance of death by the visitation of God.

"These whispers at last reached me, adding to my grief the dark, dread suspicion of murder.

"I could no longer stay in a spot darkened by such fearful scenes, even to realise my dreams of wealth. My resolve was made and acted on. I settled the inheritance with my brother's widow and sons—placed my own portion under careful management, for I was bound by our compact not to sell it—provided for the woman and her son—and then turned my back on a place which I had first seen with such hope, and which was now nothing to me but a dark, black memory.

"Soon after my arrival in England, chance led

me to meet with one whom I had known and regarded in early years, who had then held a dependent position, but was now free. She was one in whose gentleness and affection I could hope to find the repose and peace I sought. We married; my thoughts were attracted back to the home of my youth, and we came hither. You know the rest. How the longings, the prayers of years, were answered, after many bitter disappointments, by the birth of my sweet Rose; how she has woven and clustered blessings around me; and how I began at last to feel peace and know happiness. I had almost forgotten the dark past. My life, welling purely and brightly at first from the fountain-head, then fouled and stained by a dark stream running into it, seemed again to be clearing itself as it widened and deepened towards the close. I had heard regularly from Barbadoes. My brother's children were going on in the old voluptuous course. My son had sunk lower and lower, deeper and deeper, in wickedness and depravity; his mother was taken off by fever, and soon after he disappeared altogether. I had heard nothing for several years—had almost ceased to think of him until that terrible night, when I was roused from my sleep by my child's cries, and rushed in pursuit after the man whom the dog had seized. Once—ay, twice—in my terror at the danger which had threatened my darling, I levelled a pistol I had

taken up at him, but the head of the dog moved ever between, and intercepted my aim. God be praised for this; for when I had strangled the dog off him, and lifted up the light, I looked in my son's face. Yes; 'twas he who stood there, pale and bleeding. You may well imagine now how he escaped, and why Quamino, who alone of my domestics had followed me to England, diverted the pursuit from the right direction.

"What the wretched man's motive was I cannot tell—whether it was plunder or violence, or only reconnoitring—whether he came by chance or design. But his presence has brought back all the old thoughts, and filled my future with forebodings. I live in fear—in fear that at every step I may once more come upon him—that every paper I take up may reveal some villany or violence he has committed.

"Now, Grenfell, you have the clue to my life, and, whether it may loosen or strengthen your friendship, you know all."

There was a pause, a short pause. The Squire had listened with deep, earnest interest, marked here and there by occasional exclamations, and, when the story was ended, seemed sunk in thought; then rising, he laid his hand on Trevenna's shoulder, and said, "'Tis a sad, strange tale; my thoughts don't come quickly. I must think over, sleep on it, ere I can give counsel or opinion; but you have

trusted me, and I will stand by you to the end. What can or may be done, I cannot yet see ; we will talk more of it to-morrow. Meanwhile look at this, and let it cheer your spirit."

As he spoke, he turned Trevenna towards the glade where Rose was sporting in the evening light, dancing on the grass, and tossing up handfuls of flowers, with the boys and dogs all playing around her, and the two mothers sitting with their gentle faces turned towards the group and the sunset. The picture flashed back a light upon his soul, kindling it with hope, with faith.

CHAPTER VII.

Youth—if angels guard the cradle bed, if they spread their wings fondly and lovingly over childhood, there must be joyousness in their glances, a glad motion in the winnowing of their wings, as they hover and circle around the courses of youth, and see them leading, mingling, joining with all the emblems of young life, the morn, the spring-time, the dawning light, the buds, the blossoms, the springing corn-blades ; see them blended with the gentle influences of sunshine, sweet airs, bright skies, and luxuriant verdure. It must be joy to their beings, joy such as there is in heaven, to breathe in the pure thoughts and aspirations of

young hearts, to catch their free, high impulses, their fresh, warm affections, and float them upward, heavenward. It must be joy, the joy of angels, to move around, a celestial barrier, warding off the arrow that flieth by day, and the evil thoughts that fly day and night. A pleasant sight is youth to men and angels, pleasant to see the meeting of youth with youth, of youth with the morn, with the spring-time—pleasant, above all, to see young natures meeting and mingling, their thoughts blending, their impulses bending to each other, their hearts shedding forth their emotions and impressions, joy to joy, fervour to fervour, love to love, feeling to feeling, courage to courage, hate to hate, sensibility and apathy, tenderness and coldness, rashness and timidity, impressiveness and falseness, acting and reacting on each other, shading, toning, and reflecting each other. Pleasant are the memories of such meetings. Even to world-worn hearts, world-tried natures, they came as moon-gleams on the waters, soft and beautiful, reflecting in a mellow light the bright joyous life of other days.

Thus come back upon me the memories of the hours passed with Rose and Gerald. Even now—now that I look back on a full-joyed youth and a goodly prime—no memories have so tender a light, or such a thrilling voice for the heart, as these.

Gerald and Rose — summer days, and summer

eves—autumn rambles, rides, nuttings, scramblings in woods and orchards, winter sports, fireside stories, all come wafted back in one vision, the two loved faces and forms standing out as the figures grouped in the lights and shades of youth.

Gerald, as he appears now before me, was a fine, healthy, active, bold fellow, free-hearted, generous, full of impulse, full of quick spirit, not a genius, not even clever, but gifted with ready innate perceptions of moral greatness or feeling, with a keen, though not deep, sense of natural beauty. Hero-deeds and hero-thoughts, the maxims and apothegms of the great, stories of adventure or of broad fun, caught his sympathy and admiration at once. Nature's pictures were, at the moment, glorious, beautiful; but it was hard to see what impress they made on the heart, or how they were casting themselves into the future being. He had that gift, so mysterious, so enviable to those who have it not, the gift of winning love and notice. None seemed to look with indifference on that open handsome face, with its bright brown eye, on that smooth rounded forehead, overhung with short, thick, chestnut curls; or on the figure, so round and elastic that it was redeemed from the ungainliness which so often stamps hoppityhoyhood. All seemed to recognise the attraction of the sweet smile, the pleasant voice, and the gay laugh. I myself, his chosen companion and friend, sank back from a

comparison with him. Sometimes there would arise in my mind a sense that this inferiority was not real or just, and there would cross my thoughts instances from the schoolroom and the playground, which made me rebel against the judgment of the world—our world; but a word from him, a smile, or a slap on the shoulder, would again make me content to be his *fidus Achates*, his man Friday, or anything, so that I were with him and Rose. Of course he was her favourite; his impulsiveness, his mirth, the wild spirit with which he dashed and bounded onwards, climbing trees for the mere sake of climbing, leaping across brooks, to leap back again, jumping up for a flower she fancied, or springing after a squirrel, always made him the chief of our parties. It sometimes flashed upon me, that I thought more for Rose, when absent, did more in gathering up treasures, in reading stories and learning verses to repeat to her; yet some way his services had always a greater charm, and she would spring away from listening to some legend I had gathered for her, at a shout, or a call, or a laugh from him. Still there was no envy or rivalry. We were happy together, happy in our triple alliance.

One fine afternoon towards the end of August we all accompanied the Squire in one of his strolls. The first of September was near, and he was taking out some young dogs to try them in a field near

the park. They were the progeny of old Grouse. That patriarch, indeed, rejoiced in as numerous an offspring as any caliph or Eastern sultan. There was no chance of the paternal name or virtues dying out from want of representatives. The pepper-and-mustard style of nomenclature would have been necessary to designate all the branches of the stock. In every kennel in the county there was a Grouse. These were the youngest born, and they were said to take very much after the father, though, of course, falling far short of his perfection. The old dog moved amid them with a sort of pride and condescension, repressing by his grave deportment all familiarities and excesses, yet showing a mild forbearance for the exuberances of youth. No elder in the presence of juveniles—no tutor before his pupils—could have been more exact, more precise, than he was, the moment we entered the stubble or arrish. His every movement, his every attitude, was most perfect and pointer-like. All his casts and turns were made with a most exemplary correctness. Neither tail nor head was a shade out of its bearing. True and steady he moves. Ah! he will show those young dogs what a pointer should be. Hush! the Squire's finger is uplifted. He is standing firm as a rock; the tail straight and stiff; the body motionless; the fore-foot lifted; the head turned; the eye fixed and still—a sculptor might take that posture. The

shades of departed pointers might look on it with pride. The critics of all the tribes and families of the race could see no fault in it. It was a challenge and an example. At the same instant the three young dogs, with the impulse of instinct, all backed the point, though trembling and quivering with excitement. "Beautiful, by Jove!" muttered the Squire, with bated breath. "Oh, how pretty!" cried Rose. A look and a gesture checked even her voice. We were on professional ground now—beyond the limits of toleration. Presently a young Grouse—the son of promise, too—gives a low whine, and creeps forward. This is an error of youth, and may be excused. Again he creeps on. This, even, may be overlooked, as the indiscretion of inexperience. But now he is growing more and more restless—moves on and on. This is not to be borne; no dog of character can allow his dignity to be thus compromised. So old Grouse quietly gives up his point, and turns indignantly away, throwing from his shoulders the responsibility of such an unpointer-like act. Two hours after, he is discovered standing by himself at a solitary bird, as though he had found some satisfaction and relief in this exercise of character. When he turned, all the young dogs rushed in—the birds rose—and Quamino, who had looked on the whole proceeding with great interest, excited by the movement and the whirring of the wings, sprang after the covey with

open mouth and outstretched hands. This escape saved the blood of the Grouse race from the indignity of the lash, and was nearly giving the Grenfell property the benefit of a minority. The Squire went off in a fit of laughter, which ended in apoplectic chokes and coughs. Nothing is ever so ridiculous to a man as a blunder or burlesque in his own line or walk.

"Why, Quamino," said the Squire, when he had recovered breath again, "how is it you didn't catch them? I never knew you were such a sportsman before."

"Me not berry much sportsman, Massa Squire, but me kill turkey once."

"Ah! how was that, then? Come, give us the story."

"Why, you know Massa Higgins in Barbadoes; him hab next station to us. Well, him hab turkey; and dis turkey come to roost tree night on our fence, so me knock him over, and tak him for do rent."

"By Jove, Quamino, I hope you won't be trying your hand on those in the Lady's Meadow, or my Christmas dinner will come short?"

"No, saar. Me hab 'spect for property. Dey no commit trespass."

Our walk homeward led us through a woodland path. The pointers had been taken back, and Domingo alone was following us. On a sudden

he rushed forward towards a bed of briars at the foot of a tree, and then started back with a sharp yell and a look of fear. At the same moment we saw the heads and forked tongues of two adders reared above the brushwood. Gerald, with his usual impulse, rushed on them, striking right and left; I followed, crushing the heads of both with well-aimed blows of a stick; yet it was Gerald who killed the adders that stung poor Domingo. An exclamation from Rose attracted our attention towards the dog; his head had swollen to a great size; his eyes were half closed, and he seemed almost stupefied. This was a great dilemma, for the elders had left us, and we knew not what to do. Luckily an old woodman came to our relief, and applied what he supposed an effectual remedy, by tying the bark, peeled off a young ash, round the neck, near the swelling, advising us, on getting home, to rub the part with oil, and send for old Biddy to charm it. "Then," added he, "at sundown, when them varmints die, the dog will be all right, or he will die." The thought of the possibility of her old guard's death set Rose a-crying; but we set ourselves manfully to work—half dragged, half led Domingo home. The remedy of the oil was at once applied, and a hint of the charm set Quamino off for old Biddy, who was supposed to possess the power of healing all scalds and burns, and extracting venom from wounds. Presently he

was heard ushering her in with much ceremony and deference, for in his heart he had a great awe of the old crone, who had the reputation of being a witch as well as charmer.

“Come in, Biddy; dis de dog. Here, ole fella,” addressing Domingo, “here de great Obee woman come to cure him. She say, ‘Go out, snak,’ and him go.”

Biddy was the very spirit of witchdom. The weird sisters of “Macbeth” were never better got up for the part. The withered, begrimed skin, the wrinkled face, the sharp features, the quick cunning grey eye, the dirty white hair hanging in elf-locks, the red cloak, the crook stick, were all according to established characteristics. The cringing, whining, fawning voice and manner, were not so orthodox. The antecedents of her life, as they were known and told, all favoured her present reputation. She had been a camp-follower in the Peninsular War; had witnessed the death of two successive husbands; had seen many a battle-field; and boasted of having once saved the colours of the regiment, by sewing them under her petticoats. It was said, too, that the old withered form, once gaunt and bony, had often been seen prowling amid the heaps of dead and wounded on the night after a battle, and that the skinny hand, as it passed over their faces and down their limbs, struck more dread into the hearts of bleeding, maimed,

dying soldiers, than the bayonets or swords of the foe. She came in curtsying, and bowing, and uttering blessings on the house, which sounded in her tones like maledictions. Then, after swallowing a glass of gin, and attempting to force caresses on Gerald, whose father she declared that she had nursed, she sat down by the dog, took his head in her lap, mumbling some words, and making some signs as she passed her hand over the bitten parts; and when she rose and shuffled rather hurriedly away, it struck me that I saw something drop from her, and immediately afterwards the dog's nose seemed attracted towards it. I stooped down, and picked up what seemed a roll of meat. On showing it to Quamino, his eyes started out from his head, and his teeth chattered as he exclaimed—

"Dat cussed old tief—dat tarned ole witch—she try to poison de dog. Me must show dis to massa."

The old pallor came back on Trevenna's face as he saw the meat, and heard the story. The attempt to poison the dog roused the suspicion that some scheme of violence and plunder was meditated towards his house, and his mind could associate only one man with such a deed. 'Twas too late to consult the Squire. He dared not seek other aid. So that night he kept silent lonely watch. The dog, strangely enough, had begun to revive soon after sunset—had roused and shaken himself, and taken

his old post by Rose's bed. He, the father—father of one so dear, and one so dreaded—sat by the lone hearth with a solitary light, keeping such ward as a man would keep who felt that each coming hour, each coming minute, might bring him in deadly contact with his own flesh and blood; that in self-defence, or in defence of those dearer to him, his hand might be raised against his own son. He sat unarmed and alone. None but he might see, none but he might meet the face which might intrude on the watches of that night. The beating heart told the minutes as they passed away; as each hour was chimed, the dread gathered thicker and darker o'er his soul. The night wore on slowly and stilly, and the morn broke at last. With the morn came Rose—Rose, with her twining arms, her soft kisses, her merry laugh, and her play, chasing away the darkness which had brooded o'er that dread watch.

CHAPTER VIII.

On the road leading from Trevenna's house to Penhaddoc Park, there was a bypath branching off to the right. It was a muddy, grass-grown lane, a favourite abode of toads, and was darkened by overhanging bushes. At the bottom it was crossed by a dull, sluggish, gutter-like stream; and in a corner on the other side, where hemlock, and mallow,

and brier grew, rank and matted, stood a mud hut, rudely thatched, with one or two small narrow windows oddly placed at some height from the ground. In front there was a stagnant pool, in which squattered a brood of half-starved ducks. This was the home of Biddy, the witch. On one side of the door was a cage, inhabited by an old half-bald raven; and on the other lay a large flat stone, underneath which was supposed to be kept an old toad, to assist her in her incantations. Down this lane, on the night after Domingo was bitten by the snake, walked the Squire and Trevenna, moving slowly, and stopping at intervals in close and serious talk.

"Yes, Trevenna," said the Squire, enforcing some previous argument, "I am convinced that this old hag must know something of the man you seek, and that her attempt to poison the dog must have been made at his instigation. Her hut has often been a sort of mumper's inn, a refuge for tramps and vagabonds. Depend upon it, he is here. We will easily unearth him, if you have the courage to meet him, and, once for all, face the difficulty."

For a while Trevenna stood communing with himself, his lips moving as though he were asking for other and better aid than the strength of his own heart. Then bracing himself up to the resolve, he said, "Be it so; I will stand the trial. I must—I will see him; will try whether there be

any hope to reclaim, any means of rescue for him. It is my part to forbear, my part to offer atonement for my own sin. At any rate, it may be that this dread, which is overshadowing my life, which is threatening others, may be dispelled if met fairly and boldly."

"That's right. Meet it like a man. Half the difficulties in the world disappear before a brave open front. I will manage old Biddy. Do you enter the house. If he be there, as I think is almost certain, your own heart will tell you what to say, what to do. That is not for me to advise. God help thee, friend. I know it will be a sore, hard trial."

At that moment they came in view of the hut. All was quiet. There was nought stirring. A knock at the door produced a grumbling, grunting interjection from Biddy; and then, after a little delay, she appeared herself. The sight of her visitors startled and alarmed her at first; but she soon resumed her old manner, and began to fawn and whine round the Squire.

"Oh, blessings on his dear face! Is he come to see his old Biddy, that nursed and suckled un?" snivelled out the old crone, trying to kiss the Squire's hand. "Doesn't she love un better than her own children, the dear?"

This might easily have been the case without the Squire's suffering from excess of affection, as

she was said to have sold one child, and driven another out of doors, and to have brought up her family generally in such loving and happy nurture, that the eldest son was now a sojourner in the colonies, and the rest scattered as vagabonds over the kingdom, gathering experiences of all the different jails, lock-ups, and cadgers' haunts.

"Well, well, Biddy, that will do," said the Squire, after successively freeing his hand, button, and coat-tail from her grasp. "Now we want to talk upon a little business. Mr Trevenna here wishes to give you a little compliment for curing his dog."

"Ah, poor dumb cretur! Did poor old Biddy's charm save him?" she continued, in the same whining tone. "Any trifle will be welcome. 'Tisn't much Biddy wants—a little snuff, or a little of the comfort, dear," she added, in a whisper.

"Ay, ay, Biddy, we will take care of that; but we want to know how this piece of poisoned meat came to be dropped in the kitchen, close by the dog's nose, the night you were there. Can you tell us anything about that?"

The old hag's face grew more haggard, more witch-like, as the Squire spoke, and her whine became more abject, more jarring, as she answered—

"Her dear boy wouldn't think his old Biddy would go to hurt the dog—would he? she that loves all the animals, poor things. Why should she want to harm un?"

“Well, Biddy, you know that Mr Trevenna’s house was broken into,” said the Squire sternly, “and that the dog seized a man in the passage, and nearly killed him; and ’tis rather odd, so soon after that, some one should be trying to make away with the animal. We want to see that man, Biddy, and we must see him. You know where and who he is. I shouldn’t like to bring the constables down on my old nurse, or to have her brought up for conniving with burglars; but what can I do if it comes before the bench?”

This last hint seemed to take great effect, and to rouse her from the drooping, groaning state into which she had fallen when the Squire began.

“Oh, what can old Biddy know about it? How can she tell what every poor boy, who comes to lay down on her straw, is doing? Sure he seems harmless enough; and if he wants to have his rights, who can blame un?”

“He is here, then; that’s all we want to know. No harm shall come to him.”

The hag spoke not, but looked assent, with her cunning grey eyes. The Squire nodded to Trevenna. He stood a moment or two to collect courage, then lifted the latch and entered.

An hour passed away, and still the door was closed. Another was half spent, when Trevenna came out, with the tired look of one who had gone through much in short space; yet there was light-

someness of spirit about the whole man, which told that relief had come out of suffering.

Silently the Squire took his arm, and they walked on for a while without speaking.

"Yes, Grenfell, you were right," he said at last—"right in advising me to face my trial. Not for all the wealth I once sought so eagerly, would I pay back the peace that this last hour has given me. There has been much of agony in this meeting—old wounds have been ripped open—the ashes of old memories raked up. There have been recriminations, explanations, revelations, reconciliation, and at last there is peace, if not love, betwixt me and my son. O God! what a pang it was, as I entered that hut, to see the poor, ragged, vagrant-looking being, who lay huddled on the straw in a corner, haggard, world-worn, scarred with wounds in the strife of life, vengeful with despair and hatred. For years he had been tossed and buffeted—cast hither and thither—been ever stranded or wrecked; had tried the land, the sea, the mines, the prairies; had failed and suffered everywhere. At last chance threw him on the English shore—despair led him to seek me out—the entry into my house was more with the object of discovering whether any children had succeeded to what he conceived his rights, and of seeing in what state and how I lived, rather than with an intent of violence or plunder, when the dog rushed upon

him, and, with the instinct of old hatred, nearly throttled him. What he might afterwards have meditated, goaded on by despair, want, revenge, and the suggestions of that infernal hag, my soul shudders to think. Thank God, by your counsel that has been averted. At first he repelled all commune with me, rejected all overtures, and stood on his old war with the world. But my heart was firm in its resolve, and I persevered, until, at last, he softened and melted, and we sat side by side. All was to be forgotten and forgiven; from the dark past and the clouded present we went on into a future. There was yet to be the promise of a new life before him. Sent forth by me, with new hopes and under new auspices, he was to start afresh, and make another advance in the battle of life. To-night I write to town, asking a confidential agent to meet me here, and arrange for my son's being introduced into a new course in one of our colonies—Canada or Australia. A week hence, when all is settled, we are to meet at the Cross Keys Inn, on the other side of the river from Penhaddoc Ford. Rose shall see and know him ere he leaves. Thus all looks well and fair. A few years more—a few years of earnest work, of reputable career, and we may meet once more as father and son should meet."

The Squire would say nought to gloom this hopeful prospect, though it looked not so bright

or promising in his eye, but pressed his friend's hand with kindly sympathy as they parted at the park-gate.

CHAPTER IX.

A week had passed, and the eventful morn had arrived. All the necessary arrangements had been fairly made, and Trevenna set forth for the interview. Quamino was driving him in a gig. The day was fair and bright. As they crossed the bridge, Trevenna saw that Domingo was following them, and it struck him that the animosity betwixt him and his son might lead to unpleasantness, and they stopped to drive him back. The dog, as dogs always do, obeyed the dismissal reluctantly—went partly back—then stopped—then, when unobserved, crept on again. This delayed them on the bridge until they saw people on the other side making signs to them to come on. All eyes were fixed on the hills towards the north, where the river had its source. O'er them the clouds were banked in a dark heavy mass, which seemed, again and again, to burst with great masses of water. It was a waterspout which had fallen at the very head of the stream, and was swelling its gentle current to the rush and force of a cataract. Presently was heard a deep boom, like the sweep of a mighty wind—then a roar deep and hoarse as the beating

of the surge against the sea-shore—then the huge body of swelling waters was seen rolling, flooding onwards, whelming trees, houses, and meadows in its impetuous flow. It is nearing a large oak, reaches its topmost boughs, and in an instant the tree is whirled onwards, roots uppermost ; a farm-yard, with its ricks and linheys, is before it ; and presently a mass of stone and straw is sucked in and driven round in the eddies. Onwards it flows and gurgles ; nearer and nearer now to the old bridge. For a moment it is seen standing with its hoar stones and ivy-covered buttresses—then the waters are upon it—they beat and surge against it. There is a louder roar, a heavier rush, and the old greystones—the old time-worn buttresses—are hurled from their foundations, and borne on in the maelstrom whirl of waters. The dog had stood on the bridge, hesitating whether to come or go, until it was too late, and the flood swept him away. His master and Quamino shouted and waved to encourage him ; and when last seen he was lifting his head boldly, and battling bravely with the waves. Saddened by the fate of this old faithful servant, Trevenna went on to the trysting-place. Hour passed on hour, yet no one came. 'Twas true that the river might have swollen just before he came to pass the ford, and stopped him. There was as much cause for hope as fear ; yet dark forebodings came over them, and the night was passed

in dread suspense. In the morning the waters had subsided to their usual height, leaving the fields and meadows strewn with wreck, like the bottom of the sea. Heaps of stone and timber, bee-hives, trees, sheep-folds, gates, lay scattered here and there; and the whole ground was covered and lain with matted fragments of hay, and straw, and mould. Trevenna and Quamino passed back easily by the ford, and as their safety had been seen and notified to the family, there had been little or no uneasiness. After the first greetings, however, Rose turned round and said, "But where is Domingo?"

"Ah, Missey Rose," half blubbered Quamino, "him gone—poor ole fella, him took away in de flood yesterday. Me see him lift his head one minute, and gib one leetle bark, as much as say, Give my love to Missey Rose, and den me see him no more—dem his last words."

Poor Rose—the sweet blue eyes were filling with tears, and her young bosom was heaving with sobs at hearing of the loss of her stanch old friend and guard, when a scraping and whining were heard at the door.

"Dat him duppy—dat old Domingo's duppy," said Quamino, with a scared look.

The door was opened, and in stalked the dog, or rather the spectre of the dog—so gaunt and lank was he, so hollow-eyed, his coat so matted

and worn. Rose leaped upon him at once, threw her arms round his neck, kissed and hugged him, crying out—"Oh my dear old friend, you are safe, you are not drowned." And the dog, as if overcome with the like feeling, put his huge paw on her shoulder, licked her face and neck over and over, whining with joy. Quamino, in the eagerness of welcome, placed a large platter of food before him, saying, "Dere, ole fella, eat on as long as good skin hold—you want some ballast, me tink."

The dog, as if understanding the words, set to at his meal: that finished, he began to look round restlessly and wistfully for his master; then, hardly answering his caresses, he moved out through the door, whining and stopping at times to see if they followed. "Come, Quamino—come along," said Trevenna at last, "the dog has something to show and tell. God grant it be not what I forebode."

On went the dog, slowly and steadily, towards the river, they following, until they came to a part below the ford, called the Cadger's Pool. There the dog sat on the bank, looked steadily on the opposite shore, and howled.

"He sees something," said Trevenna; "go—run—Quamino, get men with the drag-nets at once. The pool must be dragged—we must know the meaning of this, good or bad."

The Cadger's Pool, so named from a cadger

having been drowned in it, was a dark gloomy spot, where, after a bright rapid flow, the river stagnated for a while, and lay in black heavy stillness—a stillness so great, that no breeze ever seemed to stir it; a blackness so thick, that no eye ever penetrated to the bottom. Black rocks, overgrown with stunted brushwood, shelved down towards, and threw their shadows on it. It was a place avoided by schoolboys and anglers generally. There was a superstitious belief that no fish ever lay there—none, certainly, were ever caught. The men and the nets came at last. The pool is dragged again and again; nought is found or seen; yet still the dog looks at one spot on the opposite shore, and howls. At last an old veteran salmon-fisher, well used to fathom the waters with his eye, goes over, lies down on the rock, and there, on a jutting point, sees something hanging and floating; the grapnel is thrown down—misses—catches—and upwards is drawn the body of a man—a young, dark, powerful man, for death had smoothed out the wrinkles and the scars. He is laid on the bank—a cry is uttered that something has been found—all rush across, Trevenna among the rest. One look—it is enough; and forth from his heart goes the bitter cry—heard by few, perhaps by none, “Blood of my blood, flesh of my flesh—my son, my son!” and the strong man totters away to sorrow and weep alone.

The man, the poor wretched man, had been crossing the ford when the flood came, and had been caught in its rush. By what mysterious instinct the dog knew of his fate—whether in his own swim for life he had seen the man struggling or the body hanging, who can tell? Ay, who can tell, save He who planted the instinct?

The body was found—that was enough for the many. “Found drowned,” was the sentence by which the fact and the fate were recorded among men.

Trevenna sat in his room—the darkness of old times had overcast him; his heart was heavy even to rebellion—rebellion against the doom of retribution which had fallen so suddenly on him, when hope was breaking on him—hope that the consequences of his sin might yet be redeemed in happiness. He sorrowed as one who would not be comforted. The door opened, and Rose glided in silently, for she felt the presence of grief, and threw her arms gently round his neck, placed her soft cheek on his, and murmured soft loving words in his ear, which were to his soul as the strains of David’s harp were to Saul’s.

The man looked up from the depth of his sorrow, and saw only “light on his hearth.”

CHAPTER X.

"Like the swell of some sweet tune,
Morning rises into noon,
May glides onward into June."

"Like the swell of some sweet tune," like the rising of rich melody, is the progress of young life, now bursting into full chorus, now sinking into low soft cadences, now running into gushing thrills; sometimes throwing out a discordant note or a mournful one, and then rushing again into mellow flows of music.

As the score of some sweet loved harmony, the tune of young life—young life ripening into manhood, swelling into feeling and passion, rising into hope, aspiration, ambition, softening into love—sounding, flowing onwards, ever onwards, falls again on my ear.

It was the transition-time of life—the passing stage from boyhood, girlhood, onwards to men and women—the intermediate period, so graceful, so beautiful in the girl-woman, so full of opening beauty, of nascent poesy, of new thought and new vision, of timid, hesitating sensitiveness, which makes the young form, the young mind, quiver as an aspen, or bend as a willow in the breeze; so ripening, so pleasant, and yet so perplexing to the boy-man; so set with hope, so cast with pur-

pose ; so earnest, yet so fitful in resolve ; so confident in inward thought and will ; so abashed in speech or action ; so buoyant, yet so *gauche*—when all that is said is such half-utterance of what is thought ; all that is done such feeble expression of what is felt. It was such transition-time when we were all meeting together again at Penhaddoc, after a year or two had passed away—a year or two broken into absences, into experiences of school and college life. Gerald and myself were on the debatable ground, men in dress and manner, youths in sympathies and feeling. Gerald more than myself had adopted and brought away with him the Oxonian mannerism, the little trickeries and fopperies which hang often on the best natures, as wisps of hay or straw caught from passing wag-gons dangle from the boughs of a tree, incongruous and odd. The impulse of young life catches and carries on stray eccentricities with it, as a stream bears patches of mould or turf, which whirl on for a while in little eddies and little muddy circles, and then sink or disappear altogether.

Any trick, or mode, or affectation of this sort, exasperated and irritated the Squire, and produced little effervescences, which in my Uncle Toby's time were commoner with gentlemen of the army than their prayers, and even now, in these days of morality and decorum, escape from profane natures. But ever and anon, some frank hearty speech or

generous thought—some bold feat or manly impulse, would clear away the clouds. To see him put his horse well and boldly at a fence—to see him give old Jim at the farm a turn of the shoulders and a tip of the toe which sent him on the broad of his back—to hear him dash out some earnest, heartfelt denunciation of baseness or poltroonery—to see the impetuous spirit with which he would take up some wrong, or relieve some distress—would redeem the puppyism. "Ay, ay," he would say to himself, "there is the making of a man in him, after all. 'Twill be all right; this nonsense will wear off. 'Tis always the way with true blood. I remember that old Royal even, when he was a pup, would yelp and pretend to skirt, until his true nature began to tell, and now he is the best and steadiest dog in the pack." Taking this comfort and this experience to his heart, the Squire threw himself heartily on the companionship of his first-born.

We were sitting in the old dining-room—the old room, with its wainscot panels, hung with the old portraits, which were a corollary on the Grenfell pedigree—a hieroglyphic illustration of the Grenfell character and history. The same face, the same features, with here and there some strange exception, such as every race shows, shaded and varied by the temper of generations and the costume of ages, photographed a lineage of stalwart, manly,

honest men, from the Crusader, stiff, grim, and religious as pre-Raphaelite art could desire, down through the stages of the warriors of the Roses, the Cavaliers, bearded and Vandyked, the men of the Georges (and this, perhaps, was the worse phase of the family physiognomy), smug, smooth-shaven, and voluptuous, down to the fox-hunting father. There was one portrait—that of an ancestor who had fought with the Parliament in the civil wars—which the Squire would have fain turned to the wall, and made a Faliero among Grenfells, save that a sort of race-reverence awed him from passing a doom on the men of the past. Gerald, in wilfulness and sportfulness, would often instance this as “the best-looking and most like a man of the lot,” and would tempt Rose to say the same; but the girl’s eye would not recognise beauty in the Puritan’s look or garb. Here and there a favourite hunter or dog, or a group of fruit or dead game, intermitted the ancestral row; but the prettiest and softest relief to the armour and the wigs and the strong visages, was the picture which stood over the chimney-piece, of two young girls, sisters, whose bloom, beauty, and youth, shone out amid the manly characteristics like gleams in a dark sky, or little oases in desert scenery, shedding the charm of feminine grace over the family lineaments.

A contrast, too, to the dark oak panelling was

the chimney-piece of Carrara marble, sculptured with bunches of grapes and vine-leaves and Bacchante groups, all touched with the skilful hand and the sunny thought of a southern clime. This had been imported by a virtuoso of the race—a Grenfell who had gone so much out of the track as to be a traveller and the member of an embassy, and left this as a memorial of his taste and travel. The Squire, though yielding to an admiration of its beauty, hardly looked upon it as a legitimate ornament, and regarded it very much as he would have the introduction of foreign blood into his stable or kennel. The wine was on the table, and dishes of fruit, interspersed with vases of flowers, suited well with the summer time and the summer light and the summer air which was passing in through the open windows. The Squire sat in a large oak chair, and considered that he thereby avoided the effeminacy of ease, and the undignified posture entailed by the small, straight-backed enornimities in which our ancestors and ancestresses loved to mould their attitudes. He was quaffing port, upholding it as the manly drink—jeering at Gerald, who affected to prefer claret. Port was then as orthodox as Church and State, and sherry or light wines looked upon with pretty much the same feeling as Radicalism or Dissent. In fact, the age had then a port-wine flavour and tone—full, strong, and well-bodied, but rather heavy at

seasons, perhaps, and apt to get very crusted, beeswingy, and tawny with age. The windows looked out on the lawn, nearly opposite the oak. There, on garden-chairs, or on a pile of cushions, sat the matrons. At their feet lay Rose, half-sitting, half-reclining—the soft face now shown in delicate profile, now turned in fuller contour, with the sunny ringlets, golden as ever, dancing and falling in rich shades over cheek and shoulders; the figure in all its movements, all its poses, graceful, and true to the curves and lines of beauty. She had not changed—not changed from childhood on to womanhood, but unfolded gently,—opening from one stage into the other, ever with the same loveliness—not brilliant, not dazzling, not coldly classical, but the soft, bright, beaming loveliness which lights on the soul with the warmth of a sunbeam and the breath of a zephyr. The eye had deepened its blue, and the long fringes of the lashes were darker and richer; the forehead had kept its fair roundness, and the same dimples played around the mouth and chin; the lips were ripe and dewy as ever. The face was all expression, ever lighting with passing thought and feeling; and the thoughts and feelings must have been bright and gladsome, for such were the smiles and glances which gleamed from eye and lip, and dimpled in every feature. It could not grow fairer, but had still the fresh soft touch and bloom of blossom—the

floating downy fairness which is to the marble and enamel whiteness of skin as the colours of nature are to those of art.

"When her life was yet in bud,
It but foretold the perfect rose."

Her figure had grown to my ideal. Springing up to a fair height—the height of grace and symmetry—and sweeping softly in its outline, never bursting into fulness, or sinking into sudden falls, it had more the elegance of the Greek type than is often associated with Saxon beauty; and when it moved, or bended, or bounded, then I saw and felt what is the poetry of motion. The voice, the laugh—they were to be felt as well as heard.

Rose, Rose! how the dull pulse and the world-worn heart beat and throb even now, as thy picture rises before me!

All eyes were turned towards her at every pause, and at every sound, laugh, or word, or song, which came from without,—Gerald's with the fervent gaze of early love and worship—mine with the deep abiding devotion which silent unspoken hearts oft-times bestow—the Squire's with the hearty, smiling, pleasant look of fondness and admiration—Tre-venna's with the rapt, still, full-joyed gaze which recognises the blessing—the all-pervading, all-satisfying blessing—of a life. Thus the wine was passed, and the evening light shone, and the glad-

ness of happy thoughts waved on from heart to heart. "These young fellows, Roger," said the Squire (for confidence and fellowship had now begotten familiarity), "are so learned and so conceited, that 'tis hard to stand up against their scholarship and their puppyism. As for that fellow," pointing to Gerald, "with his frizzed head, his padded coat, and tight pantaloons, I could have cuffed him with all my heart, till I heard that he was the best oar of his college, and saw him stand so well up to old Tom to-day with the gloves. By the by, Gerald, that touch of the left hand was something new. Well, well, as long as they cram learning into the brain without driving manliness out of the heart, I shan't quarrel with those universities. I can even pardon the dandyism of cravats, pomatum, and gewgaws, though I would rather not see a son of mine dressed like one of the chaps in the play-booth, or a monkey dancing before an organ."

Gerald smiled provokingly at this attack, and with an air of affectation gave a twist to his hair, touched up his cravat and frill, and patted a small snuff-box, carried for fashion only, and then laughed outright, as he looked down on his strong muscular limbs, which even his artificial dress could not disguise.

"You ought, John," answered Trevenna, "to have lived in the old primitive days, among the

strong men with whom the manliness you admire so much was the prime virtue."

"Well, Roger, they were not so far out. To be a man seems to me a step towards being a gentleman or nobleman. The best gentlemen-races—the Greeks, the Arabs, the Normans—were all manly. I am not much of a philosopher or political economist, but I should begin to have my fears for an age or family when gentlehood became too fast and too fine for manhood. They must go together to make a pace that will last."

The Squire was on his hobby now, so we slipped quietly away through the window, to join the group underneath the tree.

"The young ones are off, Roger. Youth to youth; young nature to young nature. 'Tis the law of the world. See how that puppy is parading and grimacing before Rose. By Jove! she is laughing at him. She will soon take the nonsense out of him. Nothing like a pure, pretty, gentle-nurtured girl, for making a fellow show out in his true colours. He will be his own man again before he has been with her a week; and I shouldn't wonder if the cravats and snuff box mightn't be had a bargain by that time."

"Youth to youth, John, is good poetry; but youth to youth sometimes brings heart to heart; and 'twould be well for us to look at the realities of the companionship ere it go farther. You may

have views for your son—hopes and wishes which lead in a different direction; and I—I could not bear that the shades of a crossed fancy or blighted love should dim the light of my hearth.”

“Honestly said, Roger; said like a man. But don’t fret about that, or have any misgivings. The Dame and I have talked it over often and often. Rose is already a daughter in heart, and we shall gladly receive her as one under the old roof, if so God please. But we must let things take their own way. We often baulk young hearts by trying to help and hurry them. This idea has been with us for years. Gentle blood, gentle nurture, is all we care for or ask. They must live on the old acres, as others have lived before. If Rose can redeem the remnant of the old mortgage on Penhaddoc, so much the better; otherwise the old land must bear the burden.”

Could Trevenna’s face have been seen then, it would have shown a bright happy light, as though it were catching and reflecting the dawn of a rising future.

“’Tis too pleasant a thought, John—too pleasant, too perfect to realise at once. It must be left, as you say, to time, and the course of their own hearts. God grant the issue may be such as we both desire. Meantime, the hope will be a bright star to follow.”

A warm grip of the hand, a look such as true

men give each other, and they passed forth, to hover round those who were knit to them now by a new hope—a new interest—a new future.

The evening light was waning into that soft dimness in which outlines become confused, colours lost, and only a few bright spots of sward, or water, or upland, shine out from the midst of masses of shadow, or the shapes of waving, flowing shades. There was, too, the hush of eve—the hush of all save sweet sounds—rustlings, murmurings, wavings of air, leaf, and water. The shadow of the old oak fell on us, and the moving of its thick foliage fanned us with a gentle freshness. I had been reading a poem to Rose—a tuneful tender lay of love—and like the lady of the lay, the guileless Genevieve,—

“She listened with a flitting flush,
With downcast eyes and modest grace;”

and if “the impulses of soul and sense thrilled then, and hopes and fears that kindle hope;” and “if, like the murmur of a dream, she breathed a name,” it was not for me the impulses thrilled, nor my name that the spirit of the poem drew from her heart.

What looks she dared—what wishes she breathed—were Gerald’s—his, not mine. Even “the music and the doleful tale” were soon forgotten in his sportive sallies and laughing talk. Then the Squire called on her to challenge the nightingale by a

song: a simple sweet song it was, trilled forth with the soft voice, without art or effort—natural and gushing as a throstle's note. The melody still swells and swells on my heart. She was a poem—music—a picture—all that spoke of beauty or gladness, to me and my thoughts.

The nature had grown with the form—gentle, loving, sunny, pure, and joyous. The natures around—the Squire's healthy true-heartedness; the gentle, genial ladyhood of his dame; the earnest, deep feeling of the father; the calm, enduring love of the mother; the joyous, free spirit of Gerald,—had all fanned, and fostered, and nurtured hers, as the air and the sunshine, the dews and the rain, nourish and cherish the flower and tree. Even the grotesqueness and comicality of Quamino, ever seen, ever before her, had instilled a love of drollery, which showed itself ever and anon, softened in flashes of fun and wit. And mine? my nature; did it cast no shadow? act no ministering part? Yes, yes. Again and again, in the sense of beauty, in the touches of poesy bright and transient, in the imaginative thought, rare yet beautiful, I saw myself and my mission. For this I had toiled and thought; had studied the face of nature like a book; had culled from poet, from fiction, and history, that I might cast and spread around and about her the loveliest, brightest, truest, purest things which were writ in the pages of creation, which had been uttered

by the heart or mind of man ; and they were drunk in, and inspired, and re-issued in the pure tones and pure breathings of a maiden spirit. I had sown, that another might reap. Ingrate thought ! Didst thou reap nought ? Did heart ever thus feed heart without enriching itself ? Did not the thoughts and truths thus gathered and given, throw back and reflect their purity on the giver ? Did they not often after, in the hour of trial and temptations, arise with guardian power ? Did they not, in many an hour of sadness and loneliness, shed a brightness on the hearth, and clothe the spirit with strength ? Yes ; the giver ever receives some guerdon in return. It is the law of being and the will of God.

The evening was deepening into night, and all knew that the parting hour was near. We had retired under the portico, where the light from the drawing-room shone upon us, and little salvers with cake and wine were being handed round, when suddenly Quamino appeared, with a scared air and that ashy look which fear or fright imprints on the negro skin.

"Ah !" said Gerald, "Quamino has seen the ghost in the Lady's Meadow again."

Our first impulse was to laugh at this ; but another look at the man's face checked all merriment. There was a serious message on it. Moving

up to his master's side, he whispered in his ear ; yet the whisper, low though it was, vibrated and thrilled among us. "Massa John's son is come, saar—your nephew, saar ; him waiting at home, saar."

To those most nearly concerned, Gerald and Rose, it was but an untoward circumstance, this arrival, which might interrupt and break the pleasant meetings. To those who knew its meaning, it bore a dark boding, a shadow of coming evil, and shot with a lurid light through the bright unclouded sky, in which many a happy heart that night had seen a future.

CHAPTER XI.

The evening, so pleasant and so delightful in Penhaddoc Park, was a hot and dusty one to the inhabitants of the half village, half town, of Dunbrook. They sat in their back parlours or courts, trying to catch a little air from the garden or opening beyond, and were not to be attracted even by the sound of the guard's horn announcing the arrival of the mail. Up the street it rattled nevertheless, and there was the usual apparition of Boots, the usual uncoiling of ostler and stable-boys, the usual dismounting of coachman and guard to compare way-bills and stretch their legs—a programme familiar enow in those days, but which will be to

the next generation strange and curious as the unrolling of a mummy, or the description of Olympic games. One passenger only descended. The barmaid of the Queen's Head rather approved of the dark handsome gentleman with the crisp curly hair, and made no exception at the rather thick lips and full fleshy skin, but smiled and curtsied her welcome, and summoned Boots to take the gentleman's portmanteau to No. 2,—about the extent of the Queen's Head accommodation. "No," said the stranger, with a drawl half Yankee, half West Indian; "I don't want a room. I'm going to Mister Trevenna's; he lives hereabout, I believe." The barmaid backed out, and the Boots scraped in—for sixpence was sixpence to him, wherever he carried the portmanteau.

Very smart and very grand was that stranger. Of the extremest fashion and newest cut were his clothes. Brummel would have sneered at his brooches, and rings, and cane, yet they were only a little, a very little, exaggeration of his own, so narrow is the boundary betwixt fashion and vulgarity, taste and pretension. Onwards strutted the stranger, on through the street, and up by the churchyard. Here at the wall Quamino was having an evening gossip with his friend the sexton.

"So, Massa Will, you see de ole Canezou vault open at last: me tink him neber going home—him berry ole."

"Yees ; I have put he into his winter quarters : he was the last of his breed ; and 'twas pretty near time, too, for there wasn't much more room. I've see'd every vault now, 'cept the Grenfells', and they tell me that's an uncommon fine roomy place, all paved and floored quite grand. The old Squire was buried afore my time."

"Me hope you neber see him, Massa Will. P'haps you see wedding first. Dat more better than burying. More beer, more beef, more dance, more guinea, den." And he grinned and chuckled at the thought of the feasting and merriment to come. At that moment the stranger turned the corner, and, playfully appealing to the sensitiveness of Quamino's shins with his whip, shouted out, "Halloa, nigger ! is this you ? you're jist the man I want. Where's your master — where's Mister Trevenna ?"

The black fell back against the wall, his limbs rigid, his eyes staring, and his mouth agape. Another touch of the whip made him start.

"Come, you fellow, is this the way you treat your master's nephew ? Show me the house, nigger."

"Yes, saar ; yes, young Massa John ; dis way, saar—here him is," gasped out Quamino as he led the way, looking back furtively over his shoulder, ever and anon, as though he hoped the dread apparition might vanish, and turn out a delusion.

The gate closed on them, and presently Quamino again issued forth, to carry the unwelcome tidings to the party at Penhaddoc.

CHAPTER XII.

The breakfast at Trevenna's next morning was not a cheerful one. All were embarrassed and uneasy save the nephew, who was quite at home, criticising the place, suggesting his own plans and improvement, talking of his own doings, and bringing deep blushes and frowning shades on Rose's face by coarse praises of her beauty. The father was scanning his features eagerly and anxiously. There was a likeness of the brother of his youth, but it was the likeness of the worst times: there was a trace of the same beauty, but it was coarser, more sensual; the creole blood, too, showed itself in the dark, almost tawny complexion, in the stiff curls of the dark hair, and the fulness of the lips; and there was a lurking expression of cunning and of strong passion which gave little promise of character. Trevenna's spirit sank at the survey—sank at the thought how much of his fate might be in this man's hands; and he shuddered as he looked on Rose, and saw in dread the dark heavy cloud which even then might be lowering over the light on his hearth.

The Squire's advice on a former trial was still potent, and he girded up his heart to meet the evil, to test its reality, and then to encounter it as he best might. The first point was to ascertain whether that fatal foolish compact, made and attested in former days, was in existence; whether it would be enforced, and whether his nephew's coming had any connection with it. It was a point on which his fate turned—a question which tried his strength to the uttermost. That compact—those damning clauses, how should he meet them? Evade them? No. His honour recognised their validity; binding were they by conscience, if not by law. The full penalty should be paid. Rose sacrificed? No, no, God forbid, God forbid, (his soul cried in its wrestlings) that can be averted. The wealth shall go—the wealth, the lands which were toiled for, coveted, let them go. We can be poor again, poor as when life began; but still there may be—there will be—light on the hearth; and then the thought of the last night's talk, of the visions then raised, came across him; how were they to be realised? Might not the blight of a faded heart still fall on his child?

There were moments of agony in which these thoughts and questions came whelming on his mind. It was a sore, stern trial, but his soul rose to meet it, strong and calm.

When the meal was ended, Trevenna proposed

that his nephew should walk over the grounds with him, and tell him all about himself, and his belongings, and the old property.

"Time enough for that, uncle," said he in reply. "I think I would rather have a stroll with my pretty cousin Rose here. It is time that we should get a little acquainted. Why, she scarcely knew my name, or that there was such a fellow in the world. Did you, Rose?"

Trevenna, with a sigh of reluctance, assented. The delay of a resolve is ever bitter to strong hearts. Rose and her cousin went forth into the garden together, and made the tour of her flower-beds and small greenhouse. These interested him little, and her pure spirit was ever and again repelled by some coarse thought or familiarity of admiration.

"Halloa," he said, as they came back to the old hawthorn, pointing to a mound of turf underneath its boughs, "you've been making a churchyard of your lawn, cousin. What have you buried here?"

"Ah," answered Rose, "that's poor old Domingo's grave. It was the spot he always loved to lie on latterly, and so we buried him here."

"And who the deuce was Domingo, cousin?"

"Oh, the old dog, the faithful old blood-hound, that papa brought home with him; he was a true old servant, and we all missed him when he died."

"Yes, I recollect now something about him.

Wasn't that the dog that saved uncle's life when that chap of his made the stab at his throat?"

Rose shrunk back almost in horror at a grossness of feeling so strange and revolting to her, and then, recovering herself a little, said—

"Old Domingo did us much service; he was always devoted to me; and 'twas he, too, who pointed out where my poor brother lay in the river; he never recovered himself, after being carried away by that terrible flood, and was very much broken from that time, and grew older and feebler very fast, until one day, after licking my face as usual, he lay down at my feet, and I felt his weight grow very heavy, and called Quamino: when he came to lift him up, the poor old fellow was quite dead."

"Why, surely that isn't a tear in your eye, cousin Rose? You can't be crying for a dog? Well, if that ain't about the queerest thing ever I saw."

"Ah—him bery good ole fellow, Domingo," chimed in Quamino, who had now joined the group; "not bery social p'haps, but very fond of Missey Rose. Me feel quite lonely when he's gone."

"I wonder, Rose," said her cousin, as they sauntered on down the path toward the gate, "that you allow that nigger to be so familiar; those fellows ought to be kept well under."

"What, Quamino! who has nursed and tended

me ever since I was born? Dear old Quamino," said Rose, with a laugh. "You would not have me treat him like a servant."

"Well, I know that if I had him with me, I'd cow-hide the impudence out of him. There's nothing like cow-hiding for those scoundrels." And as he spoke there grew a savage scowl on his face that made Rose tremble.

"Well," he rejoined after a pause, "so that chap is gone. A good thing, too—good riddance, I should think; the best thing that could happen."

"Let us come on and see his grave," answered Rose, choking her indignation. "Here it is in the sunniest corner of the old churchyard."

There it stood, in the full heat of the sunshine, a plain grave, with a plain slab at the head bearing the few words:—

SACRED TO THE MEMORY
OF JAMES,
SON OF ROGER TREVENNA
"FOUND DROWNED."

PEACE TO HIS SOUL.

Rose looked sad, as she always did when she came there, and the cousin muttered between his teeth, "He's well out of the way, at any rate."

Old Beelzebub stood at the gate as they went out, grinning sardonically, and making an obeisance

to Rose, the humility of which perhaps might be attributed to the fact of his having seen a cask of cider just carried into Trevenna's house.

"Thank you, Will; thank you—this is my cousin from the West Indies."

"He may be your cousin in blood, but he ben't your cousin in beauty," growled the old fellow as he shut the gate; and then went away muttering, "I don't like the looks of that chap."

In the evening the whole family from the Park made a sally on Trevenna's house; I had joined them on the road. There was a look of secret satisfaction on all their faces, which I could not understand. The Squire was evidently big and bursting with some design. Gerald looked radiant with happy thought, and several times slapped me on the back, or smiled in my face with some happy impulse. We found our friends sitting out on the lawn. The introduction was rather stiff and constrained. The West Indian was abashed at first, and cowered in the presence of gentle breeding. Rose was startled and fluttered, Trevenna grave and anxious. After a while the conversation became a little more easy, and the old tone was resumed with most of us. Rose would give a little shudder now and then when a vulgar thought dropped from her cousin, and Gerald's fist would clench and his eye flash when her name came on his lips; but the visit seemed pleasant enough to

all, and was evidently pregnant with some purpose to most.

"Now then," said the Squire, "we must be wending homewards, Roger, but we will first sit a little, and trespass on you for a biscuit and a little wine and water."

In we all went—all save Gerald and Rose, who, as it appeared to me, were left, by some preconcerted arrangement, alone under the old hawthorn. The Squire looked back on them as we entered, and giving me a poke in the ribs, said—"All right; we shall give that fellow the cross-buttock yet."

And he chuckled long and loudly at the success of his diplomacy. Pardon me, oh august body of diplomats! Chuckle—did I say chuckle in connection with diplomacy? Pardon again, most grave and reverend seigniors—a half-smile, a rise of the eyebrows is, we know, the greatest demonstration that could ever be allowed in that august science. But the Squire's diplomacy was of the rudest kind. What could be expected of a man who felt?

And Gerald and Rose were alone under the hawthorn tree—alone with "the rich and balmy eve," alone with their own hearts.

Happy hour! happy young hearts! Love was breathing around them—hope was before them—youth welling within. There was little need to tell what each had felt and known long long since. Yet it was sweet to hear and sweet to tell—sweet

from loving lips to give the utterance of pent-up treasured hope. Sweet to Rose's ear was the full, fervid voice of her beloved; sweet to his the half-whispered, half spoken murmurs of virgin love. The moonlight beamed softly, the stars shone brightly out, and the breezes swept sweetly and musically through the trees, as the word was spoken, the troth plighted, which bound heart to heart for evermore.

Sweet incense must these vows have wafted to the guardian presences which waved and floated around, for if there be a thing sweet to celestial natures, it must be the pure true breathings of young love.

The Squire laughed and rubbed his hands with glee, as he looked on the bright eyes of Gerald and the flushed face of Rose, when they rejoined the party; and there was more than usual heartiness in the grasp he gave Trevenna's hand at parting—more than usual warmth and fondness in the kiss he pressed on Rose's cheek, and in the "God bless thee, my child!" with which he said good night.

Good night—all had gone, and Rose was kneeling with her head in her mother's lap, telling with timid joy and sobbing utterance all her heart's happiness; telling with pride the brave manly truthfulness of her lover in seeking her troth; how at

once, ere changes came, that in weal or woe she might be his, he hers; and how his father and dear mother had chosen her for their daughter, and had prompted him to this—telling, half in pride and half in bashfulness, of the love that glowed in her own heart, true and tender, strong and enduring; and the mother's arms were gathered softly then around her child, and her kisses fell warm upon her cheek, and her blessings were prayed and prayed upon that loved head.

Good night—Rose lay down to sleep—sweetly breathed prayers on her lips, soft sweet hopes in her soul; happy, happy peaceful thoughts in her heart.

The light was bright on the hearth that night. Were there to be clouds in the morning?

CHAPTER XIII.

The morning came, and Trevenna and his nephew were walking alone in his garden. The hour of explanation had arrived. They had talked of the family—of his mother, his brothers—and were discussing the property.

"So your estate answers very well, uncle, does it. Your agent must be a sharp fellow. I know that ours isn't a very paying concern. Fact is, I am preciously driven to make it pay at all, we

have had such losses lately. Our niggers seem to be always dying, or falling sick, or getting maimed; and the crops have failed for two or three years from the want of hands; and mother is so extravagant, that we must mortgage or sell soon if things don't mend. 'Twas this property partly that brought me over. I thought you might help us."

Trevenna's face brightened—the request for help seemed to indicate that there was no power of demand.

"Surely I will help," he said quickly, "in all that I can; but how do you propose that my assistance should be applied?"

"Why, we thought," was the answer, "that as your estate is in such order, and the niggers all healthy and in good working state, that if you were to give me the management of that, one plantation might help the other, and so we might contrive to go ahead a little, and get straight again."

The cloven foot was peeping forth now.

"Well, I cannot see, if you don't make one estate pay, how having another on your hands will mend matters. I should rather recommend that yours should be put under management a while. Well governed it must pay, for the land is more productive and better than mine. If ready money be wanted meanwhile, why, I can advance it."

"Why, you see, uncle, we consider that our

failures are owing to the bad condition of the niggers. They were always bad—bad, as you know, when you left, and they are getting worse and worse, and the land is falling back every year from want of labour. Now, if we could work your people in with ours, and change 'em about a little, they might come round; and once in fair working order, we should raise value from the land."

"No, no," answered Trevenna, firmly, and almost sternly. "I will never do this. Once in my life, already, is my conscience charged with injustice to these slaves. Once have I sacrificed them to my selfish interests, and forgotten my responsibilities. Never again. My orders for their government are just, I believe, and imperative. Never will I transfer my power over them to another, until I surrender the trust into God's hands."

"That's all very fine, uncle Roger; but you will, I expect, have to turn 'em over to some other hands one day, if there is any law in this little document, here;" and as he spoke he produced from his pocket a small, yellow, dingy piece of paper, which Trevenna recognised too surely as the compact—the dreaded compact—made and drawn up betwixt his brother and himself in the days of their youthful love and confidence. He was expecting and prepared for this.

"This paper, you see, uncle, I found," continued

he, "when searching in father's desk for some documents about the estate and the niggers; and our lawyers tell me it is good in law. You know all about it, I daresay. It is an agreement betwixt John and Roger Trevenna, regularly dated and signed—to the effect, that they will share and share any wealth or property they acquire; and that the survivor shall inherit all—or that the male heir of one shall succeed if the other die childless or leave no son; and that if one have a daughter, and the other a son, that the children should marry; or that, in default of this, that the eldest son of either should be sole and entire heir. This reads plain enough, uncle, and 'twas precious lucky I hit upon it. We should soon be in the market, otherwise. 'Twas quite a godsend, you see, and father never mentioned it to us, or gave us a hint of it. Now I shouldn't wish to make hard terms; but the fact is, it's neck or nothing with me, our case is that desperate, and we must help ourselves. I thought we might have made a sort of compromise; and that if you would have given over the plantation to us at once—niggers and all—we would have shared profits; said nothing more about other little things, and torn up this bit of paper. You ride so rusty, however, about the niggers, that we must stick to our bond. And now, too, that I've seen Cousin Rose is so pretty and likely, I would rather stand by the text. There

is some little nonsense about her, but that would wear off in Barbadoes; and she would make me a nice wife. We would send mother tramping off to her place, for nobody, you know, could live with her."

Trevenna's brow had darkened and darkened from sentence to sentence, and at the mention of Rose's name he looked as though he could have struck and crushed the man before him down to the earth, and his whole frame shook with strong, terrible emotion.

"Rose — Rose — to you. Rose your wife," he gasped out at last. "My child sacrificed to you — tied to your nature — living your life. Never, never. I would sooner see her working, starving — begging even — than that. God defend her from such fate," and he wiped the thick drops of perspiration from his forehead as he spoke. "Hear me," he said, speaking now more calmly. "That bond is binding — binding to me — binding by a stronger hold than law. It was given freely, and with the impulse of love and honour. In honour it shall be kept. To the very letter it shall be fulfilled. The estate must go — so it was willed by us. But my daughter is mine — mine shall she be — mine in life; and if I must leave her to poverty or dependence, I will trust her to the providence of God, rather than doom her to the miseries of such a life as you would inflict on her. After my death

the West Indian property shall pass over to you—so says the deed. How that will profit you, meanwhile, I cannot see.”

“I will tell you, uncle ;” and there flashed on his face at the words a glance of dark, vengeful cunning. “You see, if I show this deed in London or Barbadoes, approved by legal authority as law, there will be plenty ready to buy the reversion of such an estate as yours ; and mind you, after that was done, you would not have power to manumit or part with a single nigger. They must all pass over with the land. So you see, the daughter or the niggers must be sacrificed. That’s a point for your conscience. Now, then, hear me ; this is the end and upshot of it : I shall go to London, and try if this bond is good enough to act upon. I shall come back by a certain day—this day twelve-months, let it be—and then ’twill be for you to say the word—Rose or the niggers. I shall have the working of those fellows yet. Good-bye, uncle—love to cousin,” he said mockingly, whilst the savage scowl lowered on his face, threatening and lurid.

Trevenna stood, still and silent, stunned and struck dumb by this new difficulty—a difficulty he had never seen or anticipated ; and he felt in his soul that the doom of retribution was not yet fulfilled, and that there was coming yet a sterner trial, betwixt his conscience and self. The slaves,

whom he had resolved should pass from his hands into freedom—whose emancipation he was gradually progressing and working out—they must be again subject to a cruel and unprincipled thralldom. 'Twas a hard trial—hard after so many years of atonement; and the thought—the agony of this thought so absorbed him, that he saw not his nephew depart, or said a word of farewell.

"Out of my way, nigger, and take that for your sauce," said the West Indian to Quamino at the gate, striking him at the same time sharply on the shins.

"P'rhaps no more nigger than yesself," yelled Quamino after him, dancing at the same time, and rubbing the afflicted part. "You hab the heart of black Guinea nigger, surely—you hab; and you hab not all white blood, too."

The West Indian turned, with the impulse of taking vengeance for this insult; then stopped, shook his whip menacingly, and strode off into the town.

CHAPTER XIV.

"The grand old name of gentleman."

A grand old name indeed is that of gentleman—a name and a rank it has been ever among the hierarchies of men. Throughout the genera-

tions and the ages, through the nations and peoples, from the "grand old gardener" downwards, it has been recognised as a name and a power. It has had a different sound in different tongues. Sometimes it has been expressed by certain letters, and sometimes by others. Under every synonym, however, it has been recognised and acknowledged. Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Normans, Celts, Saxons, the American Indians; all the ramifications of the great tribes of men; all the dispersions of the Shem, Ham, and Japhet divisions, have set it up as a dignity and a principle. Those who would not bow down before king, or uncover to a noble, have done instinctive homage to the gentleman. That homage is an intuition—a recognition of the qualities which man feels to be great, and high, and gentle. The title asserts itself. It depends not on patents, on accolades, on coronets, on principalities and seignories, on muniments and pedigrees. It is a nature. Where are generosity, high-mindedness, honour, courage, truth, faith, love, there is given the name, there is the thing, gentleman. The name may be paraded where these are not, but it is then only a sham and a mockery. Gentlehood, too, has its own fashions and manners, apes not those of the times, and therefore may sometimes have a homeliness in externals to vulgar perception—to those who see not the grandeur of the heart. To

the true kin it has its symbols and insignia plain and manifest; for all it has its influences. Our Squire, had he appeared there, would have raised all the glasses in the Brighton pavilion. The most fledgling *attaché* would have ridiculed his bow, and a Marylebone vestryman would have made a better speech; but there was stamped on him the name and nature of gentleman, and his words had weight, and his character had power. Vulgarity and pretension quailed in his presence, and those below him owned him intuitively as a superior.

It is the property of these gentlemen to come to the front, to stand forth, grand and true, when worldliness falls back, and selfishness shows recreant, to attest then the nobility of man, and set it above the paltry accidents of fortune, trouble, and adversity—to do this without effort, and as from involuntary impulse.

Our Squire was about to illustrate this.

We have returned to an old scene—the summer-house by the river. The party is dispersed much as before. The Squire and his friend occupy the mossy seat; the mothers have the old trunk-tree; Gerald and Rose are sitting on a sloping bank, a little apart. I was lying on the grass, reading apparently, in heart surveying all the persons of our little drama.

"Nonsense, Roger!" said the Squire, half laughingly—"an end of our engagement! Rose give

back his troth to Gerald, because you may chance to be poorer than we thought ! If I thought the fellow had such an idea in his heart, I would disinheret him. But I know he hasn't. No, by Jove ! he is a true gentleman. Not wish to hold us to our word ! What are gentlemen held by, then, if not by their words and honours ? Is every little change and shift in the world's circumstances to blow our honour and faith about like thistle-down ? The fact is, Roger, we foresaw this. We guessed that the nephew's coming was a sign of bad weather—of coming trouble ; so we determined to be beforehand—to secure sweet Rose, so that, once a Grenfell by plighted troth, no afterclap could change or alter that. The Dame planned it, and that puppy there certainly played his part very well. Luckily it jumped with his own desires, otherwise he would have been obstinate enough, I daresay. Rose has been chosen as a daughter of our house, and so it stands. Rich or poor, with lands, or without lands, it is the same, unless you wish to draw back, and object to that fellow there as a son-in-law."

"John, John, this is too much, too generous. You must think of all that is before me—of what is impending over us, ere you cast your lot in with ours. Wait at least until this year of ordeal is passed, and the event shows itself. Let the young people be free till then."

"Wait we must, Roger, for they cannot marry yet, and must bide a while. That fellow must go forth, and make his way in the world, and prove himself a man, ere he comes back to make his dovecote here; but as for being free, that's a matter neither you nor I can arrange. We can't say to their hearts 'forget,' you know, Roger; and you don't intend to act the great Bashaw by locking up Rose; nor shall I do the part of melodramatic father, by sending forth Gerald with a command to forsake the woman whom he has chosen, because it turns out that she may not have a dower. No, no. Let them alone. Let them love, and be loved. The future will make itself for them. Rather let us talk of what more nearly concerns yourself in this strange business. This compact, and its conditions—you hold yourself bound by it?"

"Yes, John, yes. I have my doubts whether it would be ratified in a law court; but it is my bond, and therefore law to me."

"Right, Roger, right. Lawyers' quibbles are not rules of honour. Stand by your word. Rose will be dearer to us, if thus she comes to us poor and dowerless, than if she brought plantation on plantation with her. In fact, we could not consent to accept a wealth which a mere technical objection would give. But do you know how far, and how much you are bound?"

“Scarcely, indeed; the impression of the nature and provisions of the deed are very vague. It was executed in a generous, mutual impulse; remained with my brother as the elder’s; and I remember little of it, except that the general meaning or intent was, that as our labours and endeavours were in common, so should be our gains and interests. Whether it applied only to the present possessions, or also to future savings, I know not: this, of course, will appear when the document is produced; but the consequence, which troubles me most, for your generous resolve has made the loss of property a lesser evil, is, that the slaves, the poor dependants, whom I believed that I had once wronged, and had determined to recompense by a future wellbeing, must be wrested from my hands, and thrown back into a worse state than before.”

“Well, Roger, it appears to me that this is a point on which you are well justified in getting every opinion and every evidence. It involves the interests of others more than your own. Consider the West Indian estates as a lost inheritance—as beyond your power of willing and bequeathing to others—but let your conscience reserve the right of seeing how your act can affect those concerned by it. There is a year left you for counsel, for inquiry. Use it well; take opinions; send an agent over to the property to examine and report

on everything connected with it. Recognise the letter and the spirit of the bond, but be sure, for the sake of others, that you do not more."

"Yes, John, you counsel well. Without any departure from my word, I may and will gather all the facts and proofs which will enable me most truly to fulfil it."

Thus soberly spake the elders—grave men, talking gravely of honour, conscience, duties, interests: hearts, young hearts, were softly hovering over the same subject. The difficulty fell on them, with a difference. The cloud which masses heavily on the banked rock or dark thicket, passes only with a light shade over the open glade, the garden, or the running brook. Rose and Gerald whispered and murmured the doubts and fears raised by the cousin's visit. He laughed at them, tossed them to the winds in sport, blew them forth as bubbles which would expand and burst. It was the inauguration of the man's mission, inspiring trust, inspiring strength, breathing hope. She felt them as mysterious agencies, boding influences, gathering round her young love; but the loving soul still looked through them clear and hopeful.

"'Twas well, Rose, I think, that I took heart and spoke that night, before the cousin, with his dark curls and large eyes, put in his claim," said Gerald, laughingly; "or I might have had to play the part of a love-lorn cavalier, have taken to

gambling or melancholy, or gone forth to seek some foreign wars, since our own seem ended now; and you would have been queen of a plantation, with I don't know how many slaves under you. What a destiny you lost!"

Rose gave a little shudder, and drew closer to her lover, looking up in his face half fondly, half reproachfully, even at such a jesting thought.

"Oh, Gerald, what a dreadful day that was! how frightened I was at my cousin's talk, his stories, his swearing, his passion, and his compliments; and then such a happy evening. What a comfort and protection your coming seemed to us all! And then the next morning, when everything was so bright and glad, to see the dark spirit come back on poor papa—the dark spirit which the memories and recollections of that old time in the West Indies ever brought back, and the evil news which was spread over us. Oh, Gerald, 'tis a sad trial! I know how papa will brood over it, and how the peace which he has felt of late will be disturbed."

"Yes, my bonny Rose, he will feel it, doubtless; but we must lighten his burden; and, after all, 'tis only the loss of so many acres, so many pounds; and my father laughs at that, and says, if Penhaddoc is not enough for us, we must be more extravagant in our desires than our forbears have been."

"No, Gerald, 'tis not the loss of wealth which

distresses him so much, though I think he had some little pride in thinking his daughter would not be undowered; but the thought of the poor people, whom he believes that he had formerly wronged, passing into other hands, to be subject to any oppression, or neglect, or ill-treatment, grieves him sadly."

"Yes, I suppose that is the hardest part; but I heard the Squire say that he hoped that might possibly be averted without breach of word or contract; so let us hope, my bonny Rose—hope that the storm may pass over; and meantime, like the summer birds, and the summer things around us, we will joy in the brightness of our present. For a time of parting is nigh—don't look so sad, sweet Rose—it will be short, but it must be. The Squire insists that I should go forth into the world, and approve myself a man, before I settle down here. He says he will have no milksop, no Corydon, no Lumpkin, loitering, and piping, and fattening about the old place. And he is right, Rose. 'Twill be a sore struggle to quit thy dear side, and leave all the dear old haunts; but I feel that, to do the work and play the part before me worthily and well, I must become a man, and learn the ways of men."

"Oh, Gerald, you will leave me for so long—leave me here alone in the old walks and over the old books, and you will come back so world-made

and so world-wise, that you will care no more about the old simple pleasures; and even poor simple Rose will have to become fashionable and modish, and learn to do the fine lady."

"Out upon you, little mocker; you know my love for home and home scenes, that 'tis the strongest thing in my heart, perhaps next to love of thee and the dear old people, and is mixed up with it too; for there's not a glade, or a walk, or a tree that is not knit with some memory; and I shall come back at all the old holiday times, when we used to ramble in the woods, or stroll by the brook, and always at the Christmas-tide, the old hearty, pleasant time. And say not you will be alone, Rose; there will be many loving hearts around, all looking to you for comfort and joy now. The Squire, let him say what he will, will mope when I go, and the mother will pine, and you must cheer them with your smiles, your laugh, and your happiness; and then there is your father—remember what is hanging over him, and how he looks at all times of trial and distress to his 'light on the hearth.'"

There was a tear-drop in her eye; but her bosom swelled at the same time, as woman's ever does at the thought of a duty, and in it she saw a mission and a consolation.

"But, dear Gerald, where are you going, and what to do?"

"Oh, to some terrible distance, and to do some terrible work. I shall go as far—ay, as far, perhaps, as to the cavalry barracks in London or Dublin, and shall see some dreadfully severe work in Hyde Park or the Phoenix."

"You will not be a soldier, Gerald—no, not a soldier?" said Rose, with a little palpitation, though perhaps there was a lurking pride in her heart at her lover's choice of a vocation.

"Not a soldier, Rose! Then what should I be? I should shine at the bar, I think—be sure to become a lord chancellor, or be very eminent as an M.D.; or what say you to my donning the Geneva gown, reading homilies, taking the family living, and looking forward to a bishopric in the far future? No; all my nurturing, all my tutoring, fits me best for soldiership. 'Tis thus I must see and learn life, if at all. Besides, the Squire has set his heart on it. He thinks it the proper sphere for a Grenfell. At one time there was a thought of my being an *attaché* to some embassy; but he has a strange prejudice, some way, against our diplomatist ancestor, who was, I believe, the most noted man among us. So that was given up, and the army fixed on. The cavalry, too, was a point with him. He clings to the old idea of the Eques and the Cavalier, and thinks a gentleman should only fight on horseback, though our foot men have done such noble work of late."

"But there may be war, Gerald, and you will be in those terrible battles, and we shall have to watch and pray for you, and tremble at every post and every despatch, and wait with agony and dread for the list of killed and wounded, like the poor lady in the village, whose husband was away in the late wars. Oh, 'tis horrible to think of!"

"There is no chance of such thing, I fear, Rose; for our old foes, the French, are quiet enough, and their great man is safely locked up in Elba; so I shall have to listen only to tales of hero deeds and wonderful adventures. I must confess, however, though you and your mother would call it naughtiness of heart, that I should like to see a foughten field—to stand in the stern strife between man and man. I think that the manhood and man-knowledge the Squire talks so much of would come upon me at once, as a nature and an inspiration. But enough of this, sweet one; look up—let me see the bright face."

And she did look up; and he pressed the red lips, the fair forehead, and pressed the soft form closer and closer to him; and then there were those soft gentle murmurings, whisperings, and wooings, as unintelligible and meaningless as the cooings of doves or the sougning of winds to those without; but to those who utter, and those who hear, they have the eloquence and joy of a life.

And so the shades of eve crept softly on, and

the brook rippled, and the breeze sighed, and the nightingale began its song, and young hearts held their commune; and so one stage passed, and another was to be entered on. The boy and girl were man and woman—the playfellows lovers. Around them love threw a bright light; before them—before all—stood trial and suspense.

So we passed on into life,—Gerald to his Hussar regiment, I to the Temple and the law. Rose passed like a sunbeam betwixt her home and Penhaddoc, doing the mission of the loving heart—shedding in turn a light on each hearth.

Time went on, and we all met again, about three months before the period named by the cousin for the final answer to his proposal. Great events (ay, they were both great events to us, though the one loomed larger and vaster than the other) had called us together. The war—the war of the Hundred Days—had broken out, and Gerald was going forth to the battle-field. I, too, had my mission. Trevenna, hopeless of getting the necessary information otherwise, had resolved on sending out an agent to Barbadoes, to make all and every inquiry and investigation into the nature of the tie which bound him; and I volunteered to go also. I had come to say farewell; so had Gerald. How differently was it said and heard! Around him were shed tears and sobs, and blessings and prayers: a few cold wishes, coldly kind farewells, sped me forth; and

yet I was going forth for others. The mission of goodwill often passes thus unknown and unhailed, whilst that of self or glory is cheered and hurrahed. Yet it bears its compensation. Yes, yes; after long, long years, I feel that.

As I left, Quamino waylaid me, and, drawing me mysteriously aside, said—

“You go to Barbadoes, massa. You do Quamino a favour. You ask for me old Mammy—old Mammy Quamino. She lib on Massa John’s place. She berry ole now. You gib her dis little money. Me know she buy rum wid him; but neber mind. And you tell her me berry well and berry fat, and dat Domingo dead, and Pepperpot live and frisky; and”—after a pause, as if struggling betwixt the tie of caste and the love of his master, he jerked out—“You ask her ’bout Massa John’s moder’s pedigree. You ask dat; she know all. Him call me damned nigger. Hi!—p’haps more nigger dan dis here. Him trike my shins. Hi!—me find hole in him blanket p’haps. Hi! You ask dat.”

And with this mysterious message he disappeared.

Good night! ’Twas a sad good night this time for poor Rose. In the little chamber, by the little white-curtained bed, she sat sobbing, or knelt praying, or rose and looked forth on the old hawthorn tree; and then she knelt and sobbed, and prayed, and looked again, on through the long dreary watches of the night. And for long days and

nights yet to come, she would so watch, and think, and pray. No mother was near her now ; but the guardian presences—did they not then fold closely round the fair young head, and breathe a spirit-comfort into that young mourning heart ?

CHAPTER XV.

The scene is changed. We are in the West Indies—in Barbadoes. The hot tropic sun is shining ; dark faces are grinning at us, and harsh voices clash on our ears ; and we pass over hot dust and sand ; through rows of shingle houses, hot and dingy-looking, with old crones at the door-steps, or sable piccaninnies twisting and pivoting in the little scooped holes in which they are planted ; on through avenues of cocoa-palms, stately and sombre, to the planters' houses, and there, day by day, we make our inquiries and carry on our investigation, never getting nearer the end, though often led by delusions and stories. Much we see and hear of the two plantations. We see in one order, plenty, well-fed slaves, merry and light-hearted ; in the other waste, negligence, scowling faces, and dull brooding hearts. But of the one thing we wanted we could learn nothing ; all the papers we had access to, all the transfers and bills of sale up to a certain time—up to the drawing of

the contract—were all in the joint name of the brothers, and all seemed to include the slaves as part and parcel of the property. To the lawyer mind of my companion it seemed beyond a doubt that if the property were given up, so must the slaves be; but it struck him as quite possible that the compact might not include any wealth which was afterwards accumulated or saved. This, however, would be a small comfort, a partial result of our labours, if the great aim were missed—the great object defeated. So, however, it seemed; and we were preparing to return, depressed and disheartened at our failure—I at having done nought for those I loved; he at being baffled in his professional research. A few days before the ship in which we had taken our passage was to sail, I bethought me of Quamino's message and trust, and set forth one sultry evening in search of his mammy. After much trouble, and many wondering queries what Massa could want of ole Mammy Quamino, I came on a lone shingle-hut in a corner of the plantation; an overhanging bank and a neighbouring palm-tree threw a half shade over it, but it was a bare, dreary, comfortless spot. Some half gourds lay on the ground, and at the door, partly lying, partly crouching, was an old, very old negro woman; her skinny arms were stretched out, and her head—bald, save for little stray knobs or patches of grey hair—was laid

between them. She was muttering to herself, and listening to moans which came at times from within, and then her hands and her voice would be lifted as if in cursing. It was some time ere I ventured to make my presence known. At last I said, "Is this Mammy Quamino's house?"

"Ah, who want me?—who talk of Mammy Quamino?" she almost shrieked out, as she started and sat bolt upright, showing a face ghastly with age, want, and passion. "You want to speak me, saar?" she then said, more composedly; "me Mammy Quamino."

I then told her of her son, gave his message, and her dull eyes lighted a little; gave her the gold, and they shone.

"So de boy berry well—eh? and him with Massa Roger still. Ah, Massa Roger berry good man—a leetle bad when him hab dat woman, but him good heart—him good heart for nigger. Oh, dat noting, saar," she answered to my glance, as the moans came more frequently from within; "oh, dat noting, only me grandchild; Missey hab him flog dis evening. She always flog—look at him." She pushed the door open as she spoke, and there lay a boy, almost a child, with his back bleeding, writhing and turning in a little heap of leaves.

Quamino's hint about the pedigree now flashed across me. "By Missey you mean young Tre-

venna's mother. Your son told me to ask you about her pedigree."

"What dat you say?" she shrieked out, her eyes glaring, and her whole frame stiffening; "what dat you say? my son want me to tell de pedigree. No, me nebber do dat—me feel de honour of de house—me suckle Missey at dis breast—me no tell—nebber—nebber." At that moment the moans within became almost yells. She trembled and shook, and looked and gibbered at me until I thought her senses had gone; and at last, clutching me close to her, hissed in my ear—"Yes, me tell; p'haps Massa Roger want to know; me tell. Missey's moder, she slave; de master marry her, but nebber sign de paper; she nebber free, she slave; Missey slave—her son slave—all slave. Yes, Missey slave—all slave!" and thus she continued, rocking to and fro, moaning and muttering to herself. Nothing more would she say, and, in fact, seemed scarcely sensible of aught; so I left, and on joining my companion, told him my story. He caught at the clue as a bloodhound catches up the lost scent, and ran on slowly, but perseveringly and untiringly. He ransacked all the records of manumission, searched well into all papers and archives, but nowhere could he find evidence or trace that the mother of the woman whom the elder John Trevenna married had ever been made free. She had lived with her master, and had been

brought up by him, educated, and had been made free, it was thought, yet nowhere could proof of this be found, and there seemed reason to think that the old negro woman spoke the truth. Thus, John Trevenna, born of a slave, would have no rights, no claims, no inheritance.

"We have them now," said Steele the lawyer, rubbing his hands; "we will meet them with this; and when the contract is shown, ask for the paper of manumission—the proof that he is by law free-born. We must not tell this to Trevenna, or his conscience will boggle at it; we must bide the time, and bring in our blow at the right moment."

We sailed homewards; and the good tidings I was bringing buoyed up my heart, and I felt within the joy and satisfaction of achievement. I had not gone forth for naught.

CHAPTER XVI.

We were in England—in the great city of Liverpool. Absorbed with my own projects, my own mission, I had forgotten that other interests were agitating the world—that great events were swaying men to and fro with fears and doubts and hopes. My own triumph, my own success, were all-engrossing, and I was therefore somewhat startled—nettled, perhaps—that all minds, all thoughts

seemed preoccupied and engaged. The streets, the quays, were all alive with moving masses—all excited and agitated with some great news. In every face there was exultation—in every voice a tone of triumph and rejoicing. The joy-bells rang the same note—bonfires blazed—bands took up the sound of jubilee. Men seemed mad almost with the frenzy of triumph—the air vibrated with it. The word Victory swelled from mouth to mouth, flashed from eye to eye, and ran like an electric touch from heart to heart. Women caught it up, passed it onwards—though here and there was a pale cheek and tearful eye, and a boding heart, awaiting to hear the death-roll read; children shouted it out, and ran about the vast crowd, dancing, and re-echoing the news they heard. “What news?” “Why, where have you come from? News? Why, Bony has been beaten—well beaten by our Duke!” The news of the great victory at Waterloo had come, and was vibrating throughout the nation, sweeping along all hearts in one full tide of triumph. A people was rejoicing, and poor single individual hearts could not be heard or felt.

It is the fate of some men to achieve their successes at times when some great interest, some great event, overshadows and overpowers all private effort or private feeling—when the individual is overlooked or forgotten in the mass. So was it with me

now. I was bearing within me a knowledge which would perhaps make a few hearts happy—would gladden one small circle of humanity—and here came tidings which spoke to the souls of millions, which bore joy from town to town, from homestead to homestead, and which here and there tolled knells deep and mournful, and everywhere roused deep utterances of thanksgivings. What was I? what was my mission? what could we be amid all this? Nought, nought, as the bubble by the bank when the full tide flows on, as the straw which is caught and eddied along when an inundation is swelling and sweeping over a land. So we went on and on homewards. Everywhere the highways were thronged, the streets crowded with eager multitudes, all eager, all anxious for tales from the battle-field. Heads were thrust from windows—men came forth in their shirts—coachmen and guards were beset, torn with questions which their meagre information could little satisfy. All they knew was that it was a glorious victory. On we came to Dunbrook; familiar faces were around me, familiar voices in my ear. Yet none seemed to notice or heed me, or know where I had gone, or why I came. Even those most interested did little more than welcome me. Not a voice said, How have you sped? So was it in the old room at Penhaddoc. There was Rose, pale, pensive, trembling; the Squire trying to bear a brave part,

but showing the nervous touch of lip and eye ; the mothers fluttered and tearful ; the fearful list had not yet come, and none knew whether Gerald was among the living or the dead. I was of no use, then—no use there ; so forth again I started to get the much-longed-for intelligence, and I brought it ; and then how my coming was heralded and welcomed ; how steps came forth to meet me, and eager voices anticipated my news ; and how smiles, and prayers, and thanksgivings followed my utterance when I read Gerald's name among the slightly wounded ! The colour came back into Rose's cheeks, and the brightness into her eye ; but there was ever a tremulous motion of her lips, which told that she was praying out her thanks ; and the mothers were sunk in silent thanksgiving ; and the Squire stood up firm and strong again, affecting to treat the danger as a pleasantry, though there was a moisture in the eye which belied him.

And the life of this one man was more, more to all, than the many whose interests my mission concerned.

CHAPTER XVII.

The day was come—the day appointed for the final decision—and we were all at Trevenna's house awaiting the cousin. Gerald had come, had come

with despatches, and was sitting by Rose's side. As he had said, the one great fight had stamped the impress of manhood firmly and indelibly on him, and he observed to me, too, "Why, old fellow, you look so much older and wiser;" and perhaps it was so. Events ripen men more than time, and the strength of an acted resolve was reflecting itself in form and face. Rose was all radiant, all beaming, and could do nought save look into her lover's face, or stroke the scar which the Squire swore the jackanapes had given himself to look interesting, though he acknowledged in an undertone that he believed the Grenfell blood had never produced a finer fellow, and that he had certainly grown a man of whom the old ancestry need not be ashamed. There was a swing of the gate, and the cousin came up the garden path, swaggering and flaunting, and looking defiant. He was rather dazzled at seeing the assemblage and the number of calm, unmoved faces; but conscious of the power he held, his native assurance soon returned, and he had scarcely exchanged the ordinary courtesies with his uncle and cousins ere he began.

"Now then, uncle, by seeing all your friends here, and the lawyer there, I suppose you are made up for a fight, so the sooner we begin the better. Now then, you know my terms,—the management of the estate now, or I secure it and the niggers for ever, by selling the reversion; and

I have already put in my protest against the manumission of a single nigger till this thing is decided. There's the bond, lawyer; you can make the most of that."

The keen eye fell over it with apparent calmness, but with earnest attent. Quickly, yet surely, it scanned every word, and digested every term.

"We acknowledge this," he said, slowly and coolly. "My friend and client will not dispute it; it bears his name, and he will abide by it. 'Twould seem, too, that the slaves are included in the property and the agreement. We may perhaps defend your claim to a right in the after-profits; but first of all, as a form, you know, we must demand proof of your being the rightful legal heir of John Trevenna, and request to see the ticket of manumission granted to your mother's mother, as she, we know from evidence, was a born slave: of course, you can show it; but we must proceed by forms."

None seemed to heed this demand much, or as of any importance; none save the cousin. On him it struck like a thunderclap. His face grew yellow with pallor; his eyes glared fiercely round and round, but met nothing save strong confident glances; he gasped for breath, and sank almost helplessly into a chair. Starting up with a fierce effort, he rushed at Steele, and said,—“This is a quibble, lawyer—a cursed quibble. You know I'm

free born, so does uncle. Wasn't my mother old Veaner's heiress, and isn't that enough?"

"I am afraid we must require more," was the steady answer. "We must see the paper of manumission, or have evidence of its existence. None is to be found in Barbadoes, at least."

"You have been there, then, spying, have you? Ah! there's your informer, is it," he said, as Quamino appeared and disappeared at the door. "You've been tampering with these infernal niggers, who'll swear black is white, or white black, to serve a turn. That old hag has been tattling, I s'pose; but we'll try the law yet. And now I'm got up, I'll have the bond to the letter. You can't make us show the ticket. Everybody knows 'twas made out; and I'll fight this cheat, this quibbler, whilst I've a drop of blood or an acre to spare."

His eyes were quite bloodshot now—his forehead covered with clammy sweat, and his face blood red—his limbs quivering and shaking with passion.

"This show of temper is of no use, my good sir," said the lawyer. "We are not pretending to quibble or dispute; but we must ask if you are prepared to prove yourself the free-born son of John Trevenna. Otherwise this bond is naught—is neither binding in law nor honour."

He had risen and tried to speak, but his voice would not come—words would not flow—and with a heavy muttered curse, and a withering look, he

was about to dash out through the open door when Trevenna's voice stopped him.

"John, John—Nephew, stop and hear me." What was the change in the man as he spoke? There were the same features—the same look—yet it seemed as though a bright light, some mysterious influence, had fallen on him, such as tales say magic power can shed over men and things. It was the clear soul and the free heart shining out through the man, and manifesting themselves.

"Listen, John. I never heard this before ; never guessed—never dreamed of it. It came to me now for the first time—a revelation and a surprise. But think not I will take advantage of the power thus gained, for aught save to benefit the poor slaves on my estate. If what I hear be true, you would be one of them. As soon as forms can be drawn out, that shall be cancelled ; you and yours shall be free beyond doubt, beyond cavil. The bond was between brothers who loved one another. He believed you a free-born son—so did I. It shall still be binding. This is my proposal : I will give you now the value of my slaves to free you from your difficulty, and reserve to myself the power of dealing with them as I will. The estate shall pass to you at my death. What I have saved since shall be Rose's portion—and a fair one, too. So let there be peace between us. So let old memories pass

away ; and the last atonement for the past be offered," he added, in a low voice.

For an instant the West Indian seemed about to hurl defiance on all, and to dare consequences, when his look softened, and his heart changed, and he stepped towards his uncle—kissed his hand, and went forth with his hat over his brows, and a tottering step. That kiss was a sign of peace. All felt it to be so, and that the end of the trial was come : and that henceforth there would only be light on the hearth—brightness in the future.

"Oh, don't look at me," said Steele. "Here is the fellow who did it all. He found it out. You must thank him." And I looked around to meet these thanks as my rightful meed ; but Rose's eyes were bent on Gerald's—the Squire had grasped Trevenna by the hand. The mother's were looking on their children. I was nothing—I, who had brought all this peace, all this happiness. So another stage was passed, another act ended.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The last scene of that dear memory is rising now. Summer had heralded all the changes—all the eventful periods of our little history. Again it was summer, and the gate of Trevenna's house opened once more for a procession. The bells were

ringing merrily. There were schoolboys, too, in the lane, and the light shades were chasing one another across the blue sky, and the rooks were cawing and whirling round. Quamino was present, too, more gorgeous than ever, having taken advantage of a licence to order his own livery by making every strip of lace broader, and deepening every colour; and strutted out with a dignity quite above and beyond noticing any remarks about cockatoos or peacocks or popinjays, which might come from Beelzebub and other friends.

All was as before, save that the young life which was then borne forth in hope and fear, now moved out in the fulness of joy, a fair young bride, beside him who was to be her husband. And the elders, the fathers and mothers, were around them, no longer anxious or doubtful of a future, but assured and happy.

Thus the light passed from the hearth, but left its brightness behind—a brightness which shone there on and on over long happy years, and set only when life set; and then, even then, leaving, as the sun does, a lingering glory.

And has it shed no brightness on me—me, the lone man? Yes; Rose's children have climbed on my knee; the light of her happiness has floated around me; and her memory, her spirit, have gleamed again and again in dark hours, as now, a light on this lonely hearth.

HOW TO BOIL PEAS.

[MAGA. JANUARY 1859.]

SO here we are safe at home once more from Lady Scrubbs'; for which let us be thankful. Away with the vanities of patent leather, and let us find those easiest of slippers. And now, Mary, you be off to bed,—there have been three terrible yawns already; I must sit up an hour and philosophise. "That means smoke," you say. Well, that's what a good deal of very reputable philosophy begins and ends in. "Let you stay?" By no manner of means; women don't understand philosophy, and don't require it:—

"What moral is in being fair!"

"You don't mind the cigar!" Of course not, no sensible woman does. But sitting up late, you know, is very bad for the complexion; and, besides, who can philosophise with a pretty face opposite him? Plato himself couldn't have done it; and I am not Plato, as you very well know.

Turk, sir, get up into that arm-chair opposite

and let me stick this paper cheroot in your mouth ; there, that looks companionable. Now, look as wise as you can, and hold your tongue ; it's what many otherwise rational beings haven't the sense to do. I shall address my remarks to you, and challenge contradiction. It is pleasant to have an imaginary opponent of this kind ; one is always prepared for his arguments, and they are so much easier to answer. Whereas, your real live articulate-speaking human adversary, if he be worth anything, is never convinced. Mahomet was quite right in his system of persuasion ; a man is seldom a hearty convert till he has been well thrashed.

Did you ever read 'Peter Pindar' ? Excuse me, my good friend, if, in these days of reading for the million, I very much doubt it. You have read the last shilling novel off the railway book-stall, no doubt, though there is such a strong resemblance between it and half-a-dozen of its predecessors that you have not the least idea at this moment what it was about ; but as to your acquaintance with our really original English writers, I suspect the less closely we examine you the better. Well, you possibly know that Peter was Dr Wolcot, and that he amused himself and the public by libelling—with tolerable good-humour, however, I should say—that best of men and monarchs, or that pig-headed Hanoverian farmer, (which was he ?) George the Third. Dr Wolcot was, in

short, to that respected personage much what Punch may be supposed to have been to the late Prince Consort, only his jokes were better; and the fact of their being rather broader was no discredit in his days.

But as the Doctor may not be a very familiar acquaintance to the men of this generation, let me tell you one of his stories, in which I assure you there is nothing whatever disrespectful either to the third George or to the late Prince Consort, or even any scandal against poor Queen Elizabeth, which has been of late revived. The original is in verse, and is called "The Pilgrim and the Peas." Two unfortunate sinners, by way of penance, were bid to undertake a pilgrimage to Loretto: the place to which (as all good Catholics, we will charitably trust, do *not* believe) a little red house belonging to the Virgin Mary walked of itself one fine morning. To Loretto, then, they were bound; and by way of making the travelling easy and pleasant, there being no excursion trains in those days, their father confessor had recommended them to put peas in their shoes. Any one who has walked a mile with an accidental grain or two of gravel under the heel of his stocking may form some idea of what it would be to do fifty (that was the distance) under their circumstances. One of them had scarcely got over half his journey, in much bodily grief, and in a frame of mind scarce befitting a penitent—for, according to our friend

Peter, he was doing anything but blessing "the souls and bodies of the peas"—when he met his brother sinner returning, stepping out as briskly as if he were the daily postman, and happy in the consciousness of having been thoroughly white-washed, and free to begin a new score. He very naturally expressed his surprise and envy, in pretty strong language too, according to Dr Wolcot, whom therefore I decline to quote. As to *his* getting to Loretto, he said, it was quite out of the question; if his absolution depended upon that, there was an end of him; for the peas, at all events, had done their duty, and he had not a toe left to stand upon. How had the other managed?—was it long practice, or a miracle? Neither one nor the other; the simplest thing in the world, as all great discoveries are;—"Why, to tell the truth," said the successful traveller,—

"Just before I ventured on my journey,
To walk a little more at ease,
I took the liberty to boil my peas."

Now, in this story there lies an admirable moral, which may perhaps have been an unintentional prophecy, on our friend Peter's part; for, indeed, morals do not seem to have been much in his line. But I trust you will not imagine for a moment that such a story would have been introduced by me here except with a very high moral and philosophical purpose. We have all of us heard this human

life of ours very often described as a pilgrimage. Very often indeed, especially in some of those dull sermons about which we have all on a sudden become so critical. Rather a favourite theological fancy, in short, and, as such, common property, from Bishop Patrick and John Bunyan down to the present archbishops and Mr Spurgeon,—which is a long way down. Yet the word is by no means so very happy a selection after all. It will not do to say that we have scriptural authority for it: in the English translation, no doubt, it stands visible enough; but there is nothing whatever in the word in the original which at all corresponds to our English notion of a pilgrim. We surely understand by the term, a person who undertakes a journey *purposely* long, or wearisome, or perilous, or it may be all these combined, either as an expiation of some crime, or with the view of thereby purchasing a certain quantum of sanctity. "A superstitious discipline" is what our modern theological dictionaries give us as the explanation of the word "pilgrimage." And we picture to ourselves at once, if we call up our notions of the pilgrim apart from the accident of theological association, a weary, way-worn traveller, voluntarily expatriating himself for a while, from a high religious motive, making an asceticism more or less strict a necessary part of his vow, and looking forward, as the termination of his wanderings, not

to the city or the shrine towards which his vow leads him—and here lies the great failure in the analogy—but to the country from which he set out. Not merely to reach Jerusalem, or Rome, or Loretto, was the real pilgrim's object, but to return to his own home, and resume his place in society when his penance was completed, or his religious standing secured. It is plain that this is not the idea conveyed in any passage where the word occurs in the Bible; it could not be, for pilgrimage is of necessity a comparatively modern idea; and one rather wonders, when one comes to think about it, that the Puritan writers especially, excellent men, who hated palmer, and penance, and absolution, and religious vows, with an honest and hearty hatred, should have been so very fond of the word. Bunyan's pilgrim is, in fact, no pilgrim at all; the very last thing he would have wished to do would have been to return to the City of Destruction where he was born; he is a traveller, and a soldier; and these are the real similitudes which the sacred writers use. Man is a wayfarer, life is a journey; man is a soldier, life a campaign; but surely the soldier will hardly fight the better for looking upon his vocation as a hardship, or the traveller get through his journey more successfully for groaning at every step.

But I find myself basely taking advantage of the preacher's privilege of having no one to contradict

me, to add another to the dull sermons inflicted on a helpless public,—and under such a shabby disguise too! My apology is, that I would not willingly be suspected, even over a cigar, of throwing the slightest ridicule, intentional or otherwise, upon any scriptural view of human life; but if it turns out to be only a theological view instead of a scriptural one, I have not the slightest additional respect for it on that ground; it must stand or fall by its own weight, and put up with a little rough handling like the rest of us; if it be not *ortho*-doxy, but only *your*-doxy, as Swift has it, then let it take its chance.

I argue, then, if you will have it still that life is a pilgrimage—(and really Bunyan and Bishop Patrick, to say nothing of the resuscitated Guillaume de Guileville, have had possession of the field so long that it may seem ungrateful as well as hopeless to try to dispossess them)—at all events, there can be no objection to boiling the peas. In fact, the great mistake we are all apt to make is the not doing so. Troubles we shall all have, plenty of them, Heaven help us! But it has been admirably said, that “the worst are those which never come;” certainly they are those which we run to meet half-way, and look at through magnifying-glasses when they do arrive. If life must be a pilgrimage, let us put a stout heart to it, and not make it a more painful one than it need be. Let

us set the palmer's hat on jauntily, and take a little wine with us in that mediæval-looking bottle. The peas must be in the shoes; that makes part of our sentence; little things in themselves, but with a wonderful capacity for making themselves unpleasant; but there can be no religious or moral obligation against boiling them, and the difference it makes is wonderful. This *secreto per esser felice* is not a difficult one, yet few things seem so little understood by the pilgrims of this highly civilised nineteenth century. Some men, instead of boiling their peas, seem to take a pride and pleasure in choosing for themselves the largest and the hardest—Brobdignag marrowfats—and disposing them conscientiously under the tenderest places. It would be nothing to them to walk through life without a grievance. Grievances are part of their inherited privileges as Englishmen. They must have come in with Magna Charta and Habeas Corpus. We have been called “a nation of grumblers;” and most of us probably take it as a compliment. There was once a difficulty amongst the schoolmen in finding out for the human species its proper logical *differentia* (meaning thereby, my unlogical friend, that which specially distinguishes men from other animals); Plato, as is well known, had marked him down as a “featherless biped,” which was irreverently illustrated by one of his scholars by plucking a cock (probably a cochin-

china), and turning him out in the lecture-room as "Plato's man;" some one else suggested "laughing," but was met by the case of the hyena. "Rational" was a characteristic which would obviously occur to many; but such a shallow definition could not stand for a moment before any one who had seen the learned pig, and compared him with some of his human visitors. It must have been a Briton who at last hit upon the happy conceit of man's being a "discontented" animal; that this was what our modern teachers call his normal state, and that such a term could not be truly predicated of any other creature under the sun. They might be discontented, it is true, accidentally, as the logicians have it; the cochin-china, for instance, with nothing to cover his ridiculous legs, the pig in a gate, the hyena in the zoological gardens; but discontent, *pur et simple*, was the high distinction of the nobler animal alone.

It seems a distinction never likely to be lost in our branch of the human family for want of due assertion. If, as palæontologists assure us, certain extinct species, alike in all their ordinary developments, are still distinguished from the existing type, and recognised at once and for ever as extinct species by some variety in the formation of the jaw, or distribution of the teeth, or equally minute but certain differences; and if time and climate seem to operate so wonderfully as to affect even

the workings of nature, and induce her to modify the moulds of her original creation, so that the elephant of our days is not the elephant of the pliocene formation; and if ever the march of civilisation has a somewhat similar effect, and future generations can no longer show the bump of grumbling on their improved craniums; still, when the fossil Briton of the age of 'Blackwood's Magazine' is dug up by that New Zealander (what a useful person he is!) he will assuredly carry some slight but distinctive mark in his conformation to vindicate his claim to a separate label in the museum as an undoubted "*homo primigenius malecontentus*."

"Why shan't I hiss?" says the free and independent Briton in the pit. "I've got a right to hiss; I've paid my money." This is the principle upon which a good many of us seem to go throughout life. "We are not here for amusement, or for pleasure; that's all very well; but we go for our rights: some people are weak enough to be gratified by the entertainment provided for us; they laugh and enjoy themselves, because they don't know better: but we see a good many hitches in the performance; it's not so good as we have seen—not so good as it ought to be: we flatter ourselves that we are rather good judges of this kind of thing; and the advantage of being a good judge, you see, is, that while you are delighted, we are disgusted. Let's hiss again—louder." There you

have the free translation of a good deal of what passes for rather transcendental thinking. Take up any modern poet, and see whether he does not sing something after this tune. He is too wise for the world he lives in. He can see what you cannot—the snake in the grass, the poison in the flower. There was a time—before he was a poet—when his eyes, like yours, were blinded. He thought this world rather a pleasant place, in spite of many imperfections. But now—he pities you if you still think so—that's all. Enjoy your innocent delusion; be happy, be contented, if such is your base nature. He forgives you, but he rather despises you: he could tell you a great deal, but you are not worthy of it; so he puts it all into some very fine language for you, and there it remains like a sibyl's oracle—musical and mysterious. Men are fond of murdering Hamlet, both on the stage and off it; there are plenty of aspirants to the character, with whose dispositions "it goes so heavily, that this goodly frame the earth seems a sterile promontory—this brave o'er-hanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, no other thing than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours."

If ever, my excellent friend opposite—if ever this morbid gloom threatens to close in upon you, as perhaps it does upon us all sometimes, let me beg you not to sit down and sentimentalise about it. If you have been indulging in too many of the good

things of life, as is the case with a large class of discontented geniuses, take some blue pill. The world is not out of course—it's your liver; it's not philosophy—it's bile. Or rush vigorously up the highest hill you can find; mount Arthur Seat, or climb Snowdon, if within reach: if it be your misfortune to live in a flat country, get up a tree or a church-tower. Get a higher view of life. Enlarge your mental horizon, and stretch your legs at the same time. Things will soon look very different. Or get on a good horse, if you are anything of a sportsman, and have a good burst after the hounds. Ride at everything: breaking your neck would not be of much consequence to yourself, in your present frame of mind, by your own admission; and probably of none at all to the public generally. You'll come home another man—if you don't come home on a hurdle. Or again, if you chance to have been living too low (a bad habit, unless it have the excuse of necessity), "*indulge genio*;" take a few glasses of wine—champagne, if you can get it; even if not genuine Moët or Clicquot, it's not the juice of perdition (unless it be made of rhubarb); it has the merit, as we learn from good authority, of making glad the heart of man occasionally: try its effect on yours. I am supposing you, remember, not to be fretting yourself about pitiful trifles, but to be indulging in that nobler form of discontent which is the purgatory, we are told, of superior

minds—that miserable undefined feeling of life's being a burden and a weariness, which may generally be traced to a torpid state of the bodily functions; such a strange and humiliating truth it is—which we really should thank you philosophers to explain to us—that the body can thus tyrannise over the spirit. Come, let me help you to a moral and physical remedy combined. If you have not the nerve to hunt, and champagne has long lost its charm, let us take a walk. Step out briskly, and never mind the dirt. There sits Bill Green breaking stones; he is paid by the yard, and will make about two-and-ninepence if he works hard as long as the light holds. Go and talk to him a bit; he'll be pleased to be treated as a human being, though he loses perhaps a pennyworth of time by it; for he stops his hammer, out of courtesy, to answer you. "Cold work this stone-breaking by the roadside in November." Well, Bill admits it; it is cold, but "it's uncommon fine dry weather for the time of year." That's Bill's philosophy; that's how he boils his peas. There are sermons in stones, you see, even in our geological generation. Don't give Bill a tract in return; that excellent lady who has just passed by before us, in a carriage and pair, with crimson liveries and a very large coat-of-arms, has already given him one more than he can read. There it is, in Bill's hat; entitled "The Stone-breaker," if you want to know—a very appropriate and taking

allegory ; Bill's heart being therein set forth in a figure as the stone, only harder—much harder. How came the lady to know? Suppose Bill now were to have an allegorical fit upon him, and take upon himself to spiritualise that charitable and fashionable party, with the bright liveries and the fat horses, into some comparison with a certain other lady we have read of—in scarlet, and riding upon a beast,—how would she like it? Bill has his regular parson already, and a long-winded Independent preacher at the meeting-house besides ; why is he to be made a mark for amateur apostles to practise at? No—give him sixpence instead ; fourpence halfpenny will maintain him in the weed which his soul loveth for a week ; and he can buy two tracts of his own selection, and somewhat less personal, if he prefers it, with the odd three-halfpence.

There's little Joe Twist going back to his work ; he has to get up at five these cold dark mornings, and tramp two miles in the fog to Squashton Farm ; but he has had his dinner now, and is as happy as a king. Listen !—he is whistling “Cheer boys, cheer”—admirably. He is but twelve years old, and he can drive a cart—ay, and plough “a bit ;” and you couldn't whistle half as well, and don't know the tune to begin with. And as to ploughing, Joe would give twopence, poor as he is, to see you at it ; and Joe carried his little brother (he is two years younger, and keeps the pigs) the first mile

on his back this morning, because he cried so with his chilblains (did you ever try to put on stiff half-dried boots, on a winter morning, with your feet all red blisters?—that's worse than peas in your shoes, I can tell you). Do you suppose Joe makes himself miserable about life, or his little brother either? Not a bit of it. If you could only hear them as they come home along the road together at night, you would be surprised at the fun they have in them. They have got that receipt for boiling peas, too, from some merciful teaching which beats even the modern national schoolmaster; and that gentleman has a first-class certificate, and knows very nearly as much as he thinks he does, which is saying a great deal.

Do you feel at all better? Your eyes look brighter already. Come, step out. I'm not going to let you off a yard under ten miles. Stay—look over that gate. There are three hearty young fellows playing skittles—for beer, I have more than a suspicion—and I am afraid they ought to be at work. For that matter, so perhaps ought you and I. We have both played at skittles too, or something worse, in our time, when we might have been doing better. Look how they enjoy it! Should you mind having a game yourself now, supposing the world and his wife were gone from home, you know? I shouldn't; but I had rather not drink the beer. It will never do for us two to

sit in the seats of Minos and Rhadamanthus in judgment even over these poor scapegraces. They had far better be playing at skittles, and even drinking that vile publican's compound, than be sitting down grumbling over the evils of the state of life to which it has pleased Providence to call them. Suppose they do lose half a day's work; let us only trust Farmer Jobson, remembering his own delinquencies, will not turn them off for it. "It's a poor heart that never rejoices." That's their motto—and it contains as much wisdom, of a homely pattern, as many of the wise men's maxims.

So turn we homewards, for these days soon close in. There stands Mrs Green, at her cottage door, waiting for her Bill to come home from work. "Wretched, slatternly woman!" Now, why call her names? She is not your wife, remember. She is not that perfect model of elegance and propriety in personal or household arrangements which you have had the good fortune to secure. If she were, you don't suppose she would have married Bill Green, or have added very materially to his comfort if she had so far condescended. She would very soon have put poor Bill's pipe out, you may be sure. In his eyes, possibly, she is all that is desirable as she is. He prefers her in a *negligée*; or, shall we say, doesn't care much about it, provided the bacon and greens be hot. Coarse, but

comfortable. She swore at Bill this morning, it is true, just before he went to work—a proceeding by no means to be defended; but remember, Mrs Rhadamanthus—oh no, never swears; certainly not; probably doesn't know how—but conveyed to you this same morning, in the most perfectly polite and ladylike language, her distinct impression that you were a brute, and will probably, as you know, preserve in consequence a dignified and injured demeanour all day; whereas Bill and his wife will both, by this time, have quite forgotten their little difference in the busy toil of their humble existence. Well, slatternly I think you called her; but the time, which the charming mistress of your establishment spends in adorning her stately person, poor Molly has employed in "tidying up" for a sick neighbour, and sat up with her half the night besides. It is difficult certainly, with our modern notions, to recognise any sacredness in dirt; but I confess, under the circumstances, I regard Mrs Green's *dishabille* with much greater reverence than I could ever have bestowed upon that under-garment of pious memory which St Somebody (I forget her name, and in any case should suppress it from motives of delicacy), after wearing it unchanged for some fifteen years, bequeathed to the kisses of the faithful.

Don't mistake me, my excellent and fastidious friend: it is not that I undervalue the delicacies

and refinements of life; I would not have Mrs Green for my wife for any earthly consideration whatever; but I hold this understratum of society to be a very necessary part of our social building. We must neither wish nor expect to find the high finish and the polish which we put very properly upon the upper works; and we ought to be very thankful to find it so sound and strong at bottom. If life be really a sore pilgrimage to any, it must surely be to these; and see how easily and cheerfully they take it. We are very busy some of us just at present, in St Paul's and elsewhere, with special missions and special services for the working classes; very excellent things if judiciously managed: we can teach them many things, no doubt, and it is well that we should; but there are a good many lessons on the other hand, and these not the least important, which we may well learn from them.

We may take it as a pretty certain symptom that we have not much to complain of in earnest, that we are all apt to fuss ourselves so much about trifles. The groans of the Britons are the highest possible tribute to the working of our national institutions. When you see the columns of the 'Times' occupied with the letters of Paterfamilias about his coals—about his beer—about the ten minutes he was detained so unwarrantably at Crewe Junction—about the extra shillings which

his heir-apparent has to pay for knocking-in late at Cambridge, and the half-crown he was charged at Diddlum's hotel for that last beef-steak,—you may be pretty sure that, if you turn to the "trade report" of the same date, you will find that things look lively at Birmingham—that the market is "quite cheerful" at Leeds—that there are no bread-riots at Manchester—and that, with wheat down to thirty-five shillings a quarter, farmers are the only grumblers. The broadsheets from Printing-house Square had no room for hotel-bills and railway grievances on the 10th of April 1848. At that date Paterfamilias was probably wielding a special constable's staff instead of a goose-quill, and the "thirsty soul" barricading himself in his cellar. We never heard much about these sufferers while we had the Russian war on our hands; when there is real distress in the household, the most querulous children learn to hold their tongues.

Look at some of the popular grievances of late years which these irritable old gentlemen, not content with exasperating themselves, have insisted on plaguing the public with. Take the crusade against street music. It disturbs them, forsooth! Disturbs who, or what? Some conceited prig of an author hammering his brains over a production which, for his credit and his pocket's sake, he had better burn; some mathematician intent upon squaring the circle, or some nervous patient who dis-

likes a noise. Grant all the facts, that they are so disturbed; they are very small units in the city population, and we have no more right whatever, for their mere comfort and convenience, to stop the street band than we have to stop the street omnibus or Pickford's waggons. How are the little London boys to learn the airs out of the new operas if you stop the barrel-organs? They are much more popular, and every whit as useful, as two-thirds of the books we print, and the discoveries we announce so grandly. If ever any attempt is made to put these unfair and selfish restrictions upon one of the few innocent enjoyments (few enough they are!) open to the children of the streets, let us hope that our friends at St Paul's will not think it beneath their dignity to devote a little "special service" to this point also. Let us have the street-preacher by all means; but save us also the street-musician, even if one per annum of our city geniuses goes mad under the infliction. There was a war of much the same kind waged a year or two ago, against hoops on the pavement; they were found to be in the way of respectable elderly ladies, and the hoops, I am afraid, have been banished in consequence; though, if the truth were known, it would be found also that elderly ladies, what with themselves, their poodles in a string, and occasionally their Bath-chairs, were much more in the way of the little

boys ; but then they, poor fellows, could not write to the 'Times' on their side of the question.

What an exaggerated amount of indignation we were pestered with, not so very long ago, levelled against the French passport system !—more mischievous than ordinary grumblings in this, that there was an attempt evidently made to get up a national ill-feeling on the subject, which has happily been a utter failure. There never was, as a matter of fact, any difficulty on the subject, except to a select few, either determinedly obstinate or hopelessly stupid. And even if there had been, what right have we to complain of another nation's requirements as to its visitors ? May not our police regulations appear to some foreigners equally vexatious, unnecessary, and ridiculous ? What does our honest German friend say of us in his heart, when first he spells out that barbarous notice at London Bridge railway station—"Smoking strictly prohibited" ? and when, after sitting in dudgeon for the first twenty miles of his journey, he discovers, by a director getting in with a cigar in his mouth, what this strict prohibition amounts to ? The Japanese ladies, we are told by "our special correspondent," do their tubbing publicly at their street doors, and enjoy at the same time the morning's gossip with their friends as they pass. Now imagine one of those pretty innocents taking lodgings in Regent Street, in the city of the western

barbarians, and proceeding, without the slightest intention of giving offence, to do after the custom of her country. She would have policemen B 1 to 99 down upon her in no time; and if fortunate enough to escape being carried off straightway on a stretcher (covered with the sergeant's greatcoat) to the nearest lock-up, would at all events have it pretty severely impressed upon her that, in this land of boasted liberty, we are weak enough to insist, upon all such occasions, on the most stringent precautionary measures in the way of blinds and curtains. Suppose, further, that this unprotected female, thus inhospitably treated, writes a statement of her grievance to the 'Times' (who, of course, keep a Japanese scholar on the strength of their establishment), inveighing loudly against the dreadful state of morality in this country, where even common cleanliness is prohibited on the score of propriety? I really don't see in what the cases differ. The Fiji chief, if he will walk along the Strand, must wear a shirt; it's a fancy of ours—a weakness perhaps, but we insist upon it; if he objects to comply with our police regulations, he can stay at home. He may eat his wife there, if he is very fond of her; he mustn't here on any account. These are the little drawbacks to a residence in London. So the French Government too has its little prejudices. A bit of paper with the Foreign Secretary's seal and autograph must be about your

person, if you wish to enjoy the baths at Dieppe, or sun yourself on the Boulevard des Italiens. It's of no use, that's very true; a mere piece of botheration (so is a shirt to man who is not used to it); but the customs of the country require it. There is no more to be said, if you wrote for a week on the subject. We don't think the French Empire much the safer for passports; perhaps neither the Japanese nor the Fijian may think the morality of London much the better for its drapery.

But the fact is, that to some people everything they don't happen to like is at once voted "an intolerable nuisance." Not having their share of the real hardships of this world, they compensate themselves by making the most of minor ones. To the Sybarite the crumpled rose-leaf might have been a real torment. Some people, having nothing better to annoy them, spend half their lives in scolding their servants, and all to no purpose, as they innocently assure you. "It's no use speaking:" of course it isn't, if it is only to say the same thing over and over again. Why waste breath and temper? If you have been unlucky enough to get a bad servant, either get rid of him or her at once—or, if that be inconvenient, make the best of the bad bargain as long as it lasts. All the alchemy of scolding in the world will never transmute a ten-pound buttons into a fifty-guinea butler, or teach the plain cook to toss up an omelet like

Soyer. Girls will have followers, glass will break, and china chip, as long as the nature of all such frail vessels remains unchanged. If such trifles are too much for your temper, there is no remedy but to keep an establishment of one-eyed Gorgons, and drink out of wooden bowls. Servants are "the greatest plague in life," we have heard pretty often; some day, if the march of education goes on, and we all take to writing our autobiographies, we may hope to have the servants' opinion of the masters and mistresses. Then, again, how miserable some people make themselves and their children, by a perpetual worry about trifles! They adopt an insane view of the merits of order and regularity, and sacrifice their own and every one else's comfort to an attempt to regulate the versatile human instincts like a piece of clockwork. I once spent a week in one of these well-ordered families: it was a great punishment to me; I hope also in some degree to my entertainers. The iron rule of that house was "a place for everything, and everything in its place." I wasn't. The disgrace my somewhat vagrant habits led me into there was dreadful. The very first morning I opened Paterfamilias's newspaper, which was always laid in one particular spot upon the breakfast-table, never to be violated by any hand but his. There I stood, with my back to the fire, conning the outspread sheets, and nodding a cheerful good morning to my host when he

entered. I had the hardihood even to read to him (out of his own paper!) the last Indian despatch—very politely, as I thought—and to request his assistance to decipher the possible place intended by a dozen letters which the telegraph clerk appeared to have selected at random. To do him justice, he bore this inroad on his rights with tolerable outward composure; but I was formally made aware, on the first opportunity, by Mrs P., of the outrage I had committed, and made to feel as uncomfortable as I deserved. Then I left my handkerchief on the drawing-room floor, one glove on the library table, another in the governess's parasol (which certainly was not the place for it, and how it got there I have no conception), and was formally presented with each article separately, and an account of its discovery, in the presence of the whole family assembled for dinner. One day the whole household was under strict cross-examination as to who had come into the drawing-room with dirty shoes. I was the culprit, of course, but I was too great a coward to confess; besides, the lady knew perfectly well who it was, but was polite enough to entertain the fiction that such conduct was impossible in any well-bred person: it must have been one of the children or the housemaids, of course; and the whole investigation was intended for my solemn warning and improvement; just as they used formerly to whip a little boy vicariously to strike

terror into misbehaving little princes. Then the terrible punctuality which made slaves of all of us, and kept me always looking at my watch, and always afraid of being late for something, as indeed I was once for dinner, in spite of all precautions—four minutes and a half exactly. Shall I ever forget it? If they had only had the charity to sit down quietly without me—if they had put me off with no soup, cold fish, and the last ragged cut of the mutton—if they had sent me to bed without any dinner at all, as once happened to me when I was a little boy—or inflicted upon me any other reasonable and humane form of punishment: but no; there they were all waiting for me in the drawing-room, all standing up, the door set wide open, and the head of the family opening fire upon me at once before I was well inside it, with, “*Now*, Mr——, will you take in Mrs P.” Of course, I hammered and stammered over an apology—“quite unintentional,” and so forth. “Oh, of course they knew it must be *quite* unintentional; only”—in a semi-whisper—“Mr P. did *not* like waiting for his dinner.” There was an abominable child, too, in that family, the very incarnation of premature method and order. All the other children had redeeming points of carelessness and destructiveness about them; and we soon established a sort of freemasonry among ourselves as fellow-culprits, trying to keep each other out of scrapes as much as pos-

sible ; they conveying to me private warnings as to how soon the prayer-bell would ring in the morning, and in how many minutes the carriage would be at the door, and furnishing me with much valuable secret intelligence as to the enemy's weak points, and the interpretation of the laws of the Medes and Persians, to whom I was in captivity ; and I finding substitutes for impounded pencils, mending a broken Cupid who carried the wax matches in his quiver, brushing the boys' clothes after birds-nesting, "before Mamma saw them," and actually cutting up the ribbon of my eye-glass into shoe-ties for one young lady who was generally in trouble upon that score. But as to the imp I speak of, he was irreproachable. If I left the door open he got up and shut it, not quietly, you understand, but officiously and reproachfully. If I took down a volume from its shelf, and it left my hand for one moment, if he could get at it, it was up in its place again before I knew what had become of it. I took courage one cold morning, there being no one but he and I in the room, to stir the fire, and put the poker, when I had done with it, under the grate (which I take to be the natural place for a poker), when up jumps this well-behaved little monster, and arranges it by rule and measure where he has been told it ought to be. I take credit to myself for very great forbearance—he and I being alone—that I checked an inclination to

punch his head with it. Is it excusable in any rational beings to put themselves under such a life-long penance as this, and to bring up their children, and force the unhappy stranger whom they get within their gates, to do likewise?

As to the thousand petty vexations which we invent for ourselves in an over-civilised state of society, they have been the stock subject of satire ever since satire existed: they have been preached at till we are tired of the text, and laughed at (in other people) till we can laugh no longer. Still, to this moment, in our own rank of society, they make the daily bitterness of life. We torment ourselves because Mr A. cut us in the street; because the B.'s did not ask us to dinner; because we were asked to meet the C.'s, and not the D.'s; or because the E.'s saw us getting out of a second-class railway carriage. Not one of these things makes the slightest real difference to our comfort or happiness; and in nine out of ten of such cases, no one is conscious of any neglect or annoyance but ourselves. Our imagination supplies the peas, in this case, and our vanity will not suffer us to try the boiling plan.

Look at the British pilgrim again on his foreign travels. He halts considerably over the passport difficulty, we have observed, at starting. But boil his peas, indeed!—not he; not if he knows it. He limps along upon little worries of his own creation,

proud of them as if they were the ancestral gout that proves his pedigree ; and comes home with sore toes in consequence. He calls for his bottled stout in the most impossible places, and grumbles if he is charged in proportion to the distance from Messrs Guinness and Co. The scene in 'Tancred,' where his English body-servants think it rather hard not to have lump-sugar with their coffee in the Arab sheikh's tent in the desert, and lament over "the family prayers and the home-brewed," is no exaggeration whatever ; if it never literally occurred, we may, any of us, see the like of it enacted over and over again.

Turk, sir, you're asleep. And my cigar is out. The remark, sir, which I was about to address in conclusion to you or to any other traveller on the road of life is—take things easy. If I may be allowed to quote an ancient vernacular poet—

" A light heart and a thin pair of breeches
Will go through the world, brave boys."

To which may be added, by way of corollary, that a grumbling, discontented spirit will fret through the stoutest corduroys in comparatively no time. There will be trials duly appointed for you, penances which you must perform whether or no ; but even these will hardly be lightened by making a long face. And there will be still more of which the making and the mending will lie entirely in your

own hands. If you choose to speculate in annoyances, there lies a large field open to you, between your own weaknesses and your neighbour's. But let me advise you not to take more shares in such investments than you can help. Have as high an opinion of yourself and your deserts as you please, but don't expect to cut all the world out after your own pattern. Keep a good digestion, if possible, and a cheerful temper. It's easy enough to laugh when you win; but, you may depend upon it, it will prove a great advantage to your play in the end, to be able to laugh when you lose. If you go by rail, don't worry yourself about the train being ten minutes behind time; it's your very idle men, be it remarked, whose minutes are always so immensely valuable. You will be quite in time for all you have to do, if you don't start for another half-hour; and may count yourself luckier than many of your neighbours if you don't arrive sometimes before you are wanted. Don't fret about being expected at home; you'll find your chaste "Lucrece combing the fleece (*i.e.*, doing her crochet) under the midnight" moderator with the utmost patience, even if you are a few minutes after your time. Don't stamp about the platform; don't threaten the company with an action; don't write to the 'Times;' buy a copy instead, and amuse yourself with Paterfamilias and his troubles in print. And when the train comes up at last

and you take your seat, don't tell us how very superior the French and Austrian carriages are, with their plate glass and morocco leather; go and live in France or Austria if you prefer it, and see how much better off you will find yourself there. You will be apt to find, in those strongly-governed countries, an extra pea or two in your shoes that will pinch you pretty considerably before you have been naturalised there long.

There was a solemn dictum of Pythagoras which much puzzled his scholars, and has been a perplexity to the learned ever since—"Abstain from beans." Some think it contained a deep political allusion—beans being the substitute for voting-papers at Athens—and that extending, as he no doubt meant it to do, to future ages, it conveyed to us a warning against having anything to do with Mr Bright and the ballot. Others suppose that it referred to his doctrine of the transmigration of souls, and that he feared he might some day be guilty of eating his grandmother in the bodily shape of a haricot. Possibly, like some other wise men, he did not quite understand himself; possibly it was only intended as a burlesque upon all sententious philosophy. Let me offer, as an appropriate pendant to that great man's saying, this which, not being a great man, I have felt bound to explain—"Boil your peas."

CLIVE'S DREAM BEFORE THE BATTLE OF PLASSEY

[*MAGA.* JULY 1854.]

["The majority (of the council) pronounced against fighting, and Clive declared his concurrence with the majority. . . . But scarcely had the meeting broken up than he was himself again. He retired alone under the shade of some trees, and passed near an hour there in thought. He came back determined to put everything to the hazard, and gave orders that all should be in readiness for passing the river on the morrow."—MACAULAY.]

BENEATH the thick old mango-trees the trunks are
growing black ;
The night-hawk screams a bolder note, and wheels a
wider track ;
Far to the right, all ghastly white, thick tents are dimly
seen,
Barbaric music faintly wails, the river runs between ;
All blood-red on the western verge the skirts of twi-
light lie,
And two pale horns from the east go slowly up the sky.

Who walks at such an hour in the strange garb of the
Frank,
And flings himself in gloomy guise on yonder grassy bank ;

And mutters oft—"Twere madness, sure, with such a
force as ours,
To bide the brunt while yet the Moor unbroken holds
his powers,
In hope to gain Moorshedabad or Patna's distant
towers" ?
Sore labours has that leader proved, but toil has worn
him less
Than cares which weighed, and nigh dismayed, his soul
with their distress.
For stronger is the chief to do, than steady to endure,
And till to-day the swift with him has ever been the sure.
But now is come a direr strait than e'er the little band
Have known since first their venturous feet have trod
this foreign strand ;
The blood-stained rake, the tiger-prince, that laid their
city low,
And slew their best and bravest by a cold-blood coward's
blow,—
He marches now with all his force, and boasts, in
drunken glee,
To drive the pale-faced traders down before him to the sea;
And well may those stout strangers rest content his speed
to stay,
Or trust to wait till cools his hate, or his armies melt away.
Now sinks the din from either camp, and not a sound
is heard
Except the roar of hungry beast, or scream of prowling bird;
And CLIVE still lies extended; but no more he mutters now,
For sleep has sealed his weary eyes, and soothed his
aching brow.
'Tis strange and sad to see that MAN of action in repose,
As sleeps the child, or mother mild, to outward sense
he shows :

To sense he shows ; but who can say if all be peace
within,

Or if the frame's mute trance allow full scope to wrath
and sin ?

Ha ! mark you not that clenching hand, that wild con-
vulsive start ;

And who but deems that angry dreams are surging at
his heart ?

The body sleeps, the spirit wakes ; and in the unknown land
She visits then, she does what he could never understand.

Her jailor dull, he chains her down ; but when his care
grows slack,

Her flight she takes till he awakes, and quickly calls
her back ;

But what would it avail to tell of where her feet have been ?
He could not understand her speech, or see what she has
seen.

Sleep, warrior, sleep, the GOD of battles will have work
for thee,

And well though thou canst toil at need, yet rested
must thou be ;

For, violent and bad, thou art JEHOVAH'S servant still,
And e'en to thee a dream may be the angel of His will.

What changing cloud, what wreathing shapes float
through that slumberer's breast !

What voices of vague augury, rejoicing or distress !

While underneath and over all the tissue is of gore,

The crimson coat, the meteor flag, the hue of England's war,

The tiger-prince flies fast away, the far shout in his rear,

The echo falls on Delhi's walls, and rocky Jessulmere ;

The wild Mahratta hosts are broke, the proud Rohilla
yields ;

High kings are bending on their thrones, and peasants
in their fields.

See WELLESLEY learn his deathless fight, see beams of
glory take
The comely head of COMBERMERE, the gallant crest of
LAKE,
The bayonet - push, the sabre - charge, through every
realm of Ind,
From far Nepal to Cabul's heights and parks of sunny
Sindh;
The red flood creeps from east to west, as goes the
mighty sun
To where in disappointment turned the hosts of Macedon;
From Martaban, from Comorin, to where Hydaspes flows,
Or holy Himalaya hoards her immemorial snows.
Sunlike it creeps; a flood of light, with blessings in its
train;
The darkened land, the barren land, shall ne'er be so
again.
O Western light! O light of blood! O hue of England's
war!
He starts to life with a sudden bound, to speak of peace
no more.
"Ho! call the chiefs; ho! bid the men to gather on the
lawn,
Prepare the boats—in silence all—we cross before the
dawn."
But those who heard the welcome word, still wondered
that he said—
"Perplexed, I ween, my rest has been, but GOD is for
the Red."

H. G. KEENE.

X13964

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 000 297 987 0

